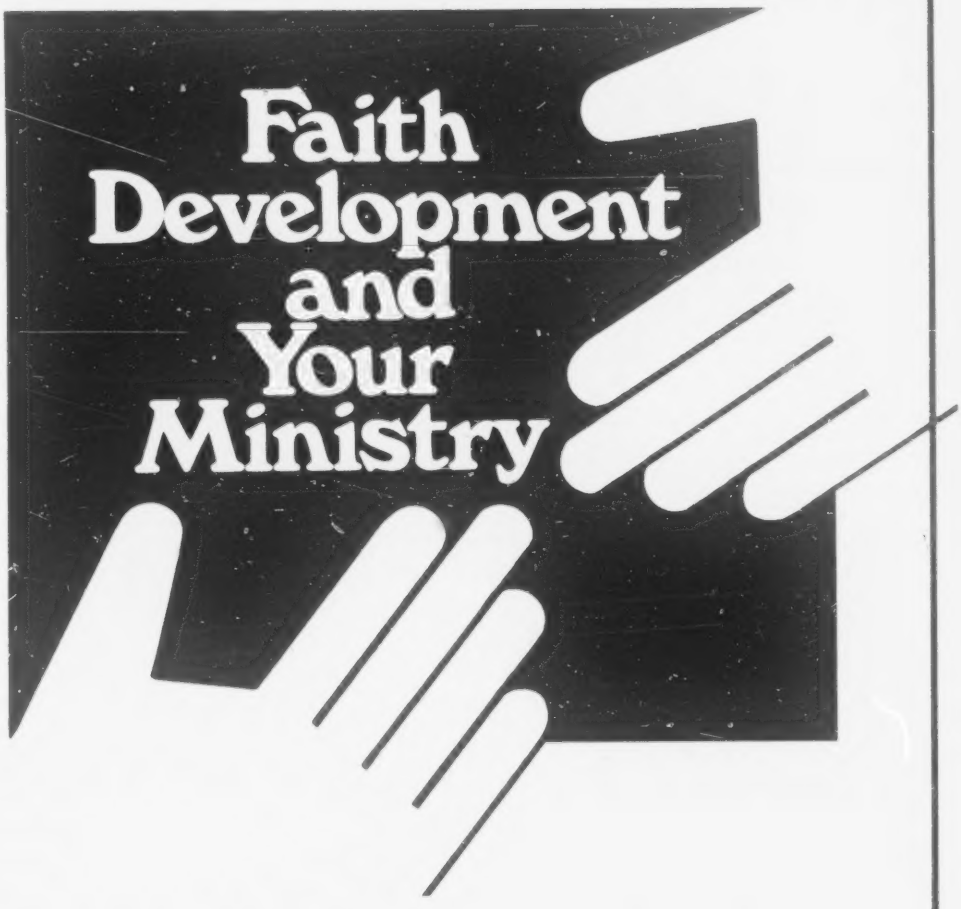
Faith Development and Your Ministry



Report based on a Gallup survey conducted for

The Religious Education Association of the United States and Canada

by

The Princeton Religion Research Center

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THE PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER

The Princeton Religion Research Center is an interfaith, non-denominational research organization with headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey. The PRRC, founded in 1977, specializes in creative, actionable research, utilizing the worldwide attitudinal and behavioral facilities of Gallup International.

The purpose of the PRRC is to gain a better understanding of the nature and depth of religious commitment in the U.S. and abroad and to explore the factors behind spiritual growth or decline.

It is hoped that this information will contribute to greater understanding and improved relations among the many religions in our pluralistic society.

The PRRC exists solely to provide as accurate information as possible on the changing religious scene and does not espouse a particular religion, movement, or cause.

EMERGING TRENDS, published by the Princeton Religion Research Center, is a monthly newsletter created to alert religious leaders and others to emerging trends in religion.

Faith Development and Your Ministry

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Introduction

Building a truly effective ministry requires an awareness of the stages of growth in a person's spiritual life, from childhood to old age, as well as an awareness of the impact of "life crises" on faith development.

Not only an awareness but a *response*, because failure to minister to people at their current stage of faith development—and to respond appropriately to spiritual "highs" and "lows"—could result in a serious dropout rate in your church or synagogue.

For centuries it has been assumed that faith is something given, constant, unchanging. Now, however, it is clear that people go through "passages" in their spiritual lives, just as they do in other dimensions of their existence. Yet many religious professionals—clergy, counselors, youth leaders, and educators—sometimes appear to be insensitive in their teaching and program planning to people's spiritual journeys.

This new publication, FAITH DEVELOPMENT AND YOUR MINISTRY, based on a landmark study four years in the making, will guide you in your efforts to respond to the spiritual changes people experience as they move through life. The study was conducted by The Gallup Organization, Inc. for Faith Development in the Adult Age Cycle, a research project of the Religious Education Association of the United States and Canada in cooperation with the Center for Religious Education, College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.

In FAITH DEVELOPMENT AND YOUR MINISTRY, these and other vital questions are addressed:

- Do Americans think a person's faith should or should not change?
- How many have experienced a change in faith during their lifetimes? At what age?
- How much thought have people given to developing their faith?
- How does divorce affect one's faith structures?
- Are there predictable patterns in faith development?
- Does job insecurity influence a person's faith?
- Does the "midlife transition" affect faith values?
- How do changes in faith relate to religious involvement and commitment?

- Is faith development related positively to one's involvement in social issues and concerns?
- What is the role of religious and spiritual experiences in the lives of Americans?

FAITH DEVELOPMENT AND YOUR MINISTRY not only sheds light on these and other vital questions, but also explores the practical implications of the survey findings for your ministry.

This report includes all the questions asked in our national survey so that you can ask the same questions of members of your parish, congregation or synagogue. Also included are instructions on how to conduct focus group research.

The reader will find this survey to be highly actionable, we believe, with many practical implications for your ministry. At the back of this report you will find 10 steps suggested by the survey findings that could enhance your ministry (see *Practical Implications—10 Suggested Steps*).

Background Of Study

This is a report of a survey conducted by the Gallup Organization for the FAITH DEVELOPMENT IN THE ADULT LIFE CYCLE Project. This Project is sponsored by the Religious Education Association of the United States and Canada and a consortium of twenty-two other national and regional denominations and organizations in both Canada and the United States. The Project began in 1981 with its purpose to seek to identify and better understand relationships between the changing dynamics of life through adulthood and an individual's understanding of his or her faith.

The data collection was carried out through two complementary but distinctly different research methodologies. *Module 1* was conducted by the Princeton Religion Research Center through The Gallup Organization; its report is encompassed in these pages. It is complemented by *Module 2* which uses in-depth, qualitative interview and analysis methodologies designed to probe more deeply into *meanings* of responses. These dual approaches provide for a "dialogue" between two sets of data collected by means of the two different methodologies.

A close working relationship was established early between the Princeton Religion Research Center/Gallup Organization and the Project. Three representatives of The Gallup Organization participated in the Project's 1981 Symposium at which the basic direction of the research was established. In 1982, The Gallup Organization conducted a pretest to determine the feasibility of utilizing survey research for questions related to persons' faith development. Since that time, members of the Gallup staff have met regularly with Dr. Kenneth Stokes, Executive Director of the Project, and periodically with its Steering Committee in the development of the instrument used in the *Module 1* research aspect of the study.

As has been noted, the overall objective was to measure, among a national cross-section of the U.S. population, the dimensions of faith and faith development through the adult life cycle. Specifically, the Project sought to gather its data, through both Module 1 and Module 2, around seven hypotheses developed originally at the 1981 Symposium and refined by the Steering Committee. These hypotheses are stated below:

Hypothesis One: The dynamics of FAITH DEVELOPMENT are different for men and women.

Hypothesis Two: FAITH DEVELOPMENT does not occur at a consistent rate or in a uniform way throughout adulthood, but rather in varying patterns of activity and quiescence directly related to specific chronological periods of the ADULT LIFE CYCLE.

Hypothesis Three: There is a relationship between periods of transition, change and crisis in one's life and his or her FAITH DEVELOPMENT.

Hypothesis Four: FAITH DEVELOPMENT is positively related to one's involvement in organized religion.

Hypothesis Five: FAITH DEVELOPMENT is positively related to one's involvement in social issues and concerns.

Hypothesis Six: FAITH DEVELOPMENT involves struggle leading to both cognitive and affective change.

Hypothesis Seven: FAITH DEVELOPMENT is positively related to one's involvement in educational experiences.

Research Design

The study was conducted through telephone interviews with a national cross-section of households. In each household one person 18 years of age or older was interviewed. A total of 1,042 interviews were completed during the period from March 18 through March 31, 1985. All interviews were conducted by Gallup's telephone interviewing staff located in Princeton, New Jersey.

A complete description of the sample, demographic composition of the sample, tables of recommended sampling tolerances and a copy of the questionnaire will be found in the technical appendix.

Developmental Theory and Faith Development

Developmental theory is based on the principle that human beings move through life according to regular and known principles of stability and change. In the study of human behavior, one observes individuals and groups of individuals in different age clusters to determine how these larger principles of stability and change affect their growth and development.

Developmental theory related to adults is only a bit more than a generation old, its first major formulation having been stated by Erik Erikson in 1950 in *Childhood and Society*. Erikson delineates eight identifiable chronological stages or periods of psychosocial development in the life cycle between birth and death, three of them in the adult years. Since Erikson's statement, the field of adult developmental psychology has grown rapidly.

The concept of *faith* development is even newer, having appeared first in the early 1970's, primarily around the research and conceptual framework of James Fowler, who suggests six stages of faith development in the life cycle. Interest in this concept in the religious community is currently growing rapidly.

In the strictest sense, the survey reported in these pages, which examines individuals at one point in their lives, might better be seen as a measure of faith *change* than of faith *development*. Its value comes in its ability to record and cross-tabulate, at a high level of statistical validity, the responses from a representative sample of the United States population on matters related to their faith in the context of their own understanding of their development in adulthood.

Definitions of Faith and Faith Development

The Research Advisory Committee was formed by action of the Steering Committee in June 1983 to make recommendations regarding the design of the projected research. In its November 1983 memo to the Steering Committee, working definitions of "faith" and "faith development" were developed. The following is drawn from that memo.

"The matter of definition has been the most difficult element in the development of the research design. . . .

"From the beginning of the project, we have used the term 'faith development' as descriptive of that which was to be investigated. In the early review of the literature, we became highly conscious of the wide variety not only of definitions but also of fundamental theological and personal understandings of the meaning of 'faith.' At the symposium (August 1981) most of the responses from leaders and participants alike focused on the single question, [the meaning of faith]...

"The Module I pretest, conducted by The Gallup Organization in the summer of 1982, was similarly vague. It is obvious that responses to the questions put were based almost entirely upon the respondent's personal understanding of the meaning of 'faith.' The questionnaire cries for definition, but a comprehensive definition acceptable to a broad spectrum of individuals from a variety of religious traditions would be too complex to communicate in a telephone interview.

"The term 'faith development' also presents a problem of incongruity for people whose 'faith' is essentially belief, doctrine, or dogma. In other words, until one understands and accepts the basic concept of faith as *dynamic*, faith as *process*, faith as *ever becoming*, 'faith development' is but a juxtaposition of mutually exclusive words."

There was agreement that the definitions used should be simple and broad enough to be inclusive of all persons. Furthermore, it was agreed the definition had to have a highly practical quality. Therefore, the following definitions were established:

- **Faith Development:** The dynamics by which a person finds and makes meaning of life's significant questions and issues, adheres to this meaning, and acts it out in his or her life span.

- **Faith:** The finding and making meaning of life's significant questions and issues, adhering to this meaning, and acting it out.

- **Adult Life Cycle:** The changing patterns of physical, psychological and social change which occur in adulthood from the transition out of adolescence through midlife and older adulthood to death.

Cross-Tabulations

All questions were cross-tabulated by the following:

- Age of respondent
- Sex of respondent
- Marital status
- Household composition, e.g.,
  - One adult, no children
  - One adult with children
  - Two or more adults, no children
  - Two or more adults with children
- Education of respondent
- Annual household income
- Race
- Region of country
- Type of community (city size), e.g.,
  - Central city
  - Other urban
  - Rural area

- Religious preference, e.g.
  - Protestant
  - Catholic
  - Jewish
  - Other
  - None

- Definition of faith, based on respondent's choice of one of four options provided, e.g.,
  - A relationship with God
  - Finding meaning in life
  - A set of beliefs
  - Membership in a church or synagogue

In addition, a number of indices were created based on responses to one or more questions. These indices are described below:

- **Activism index,** based on participation within the past two years in a number of social or religious voluntary activities (see Question 1).* The index is a simple measure of the number of activities, i.e.,
  - Low activism (0 to 3 activities)
  - Average activism (4 or 5 activities)
  - High activism (6 to 9 activities)

- **Believe faith should change,** based on response to a question concerning whether one's faith should change or not (see Question 2). Respondents classified as either "Yes" (believe faith should change) or "No" (believe faith should not change).

- **Change in faith index,** a composite measure based on response to two questions (Questions 9 and 10). The first question asked respondents to classify themselves currently, on a five-point scale, with respect to the extent of their "faith." The second asked for a classification of "faith" at the age of 16 on the same scale. Respondents who placed themselves higher on the scale currently than at age 16 were categorized as having "more" faith, those who relative to age 16 put themselves lower on the scale currently were categorized as having "less" faith. Respondents who choose the same point in the scale for each question are called "unchanged."

- **Experienced faith change;** respondents were asked directly the time elapsed since they experienced a significant change of faith, if ever. (See Question 17*) The measure is used in two ways:
  - (a) where appropriate, the full range of responses—including time elapsed since the faith change—is used;
  - (b) where time elapsed has no significant bearing on the analysis, the respondents are simply grouped into those who have experienced a change in faith and those who have not.

- **Result of faith change.** Those respondents reporting a faith change (in the preceding measure) were asked whether the resulting faith was "totally" different or "only a little" different. (See Question 18)

*The Questions may be found in the technical appendix.

- **Religious activism index**, respondents were classified as follows
  - Attended religious services in past month (See Question 1)
  - Is a member of a church or religious group (See Questions 23-24)
    - More active than 10 years ago
    - Less active than 10 years ago
    - No change
  - Is not a member of a church or religious group (and)
    - Less active than 10 years ago
    - No change

- **Importance of religion**, rating of importance (See Question 11)
  - Very important
  - Fairly important
  - Not important

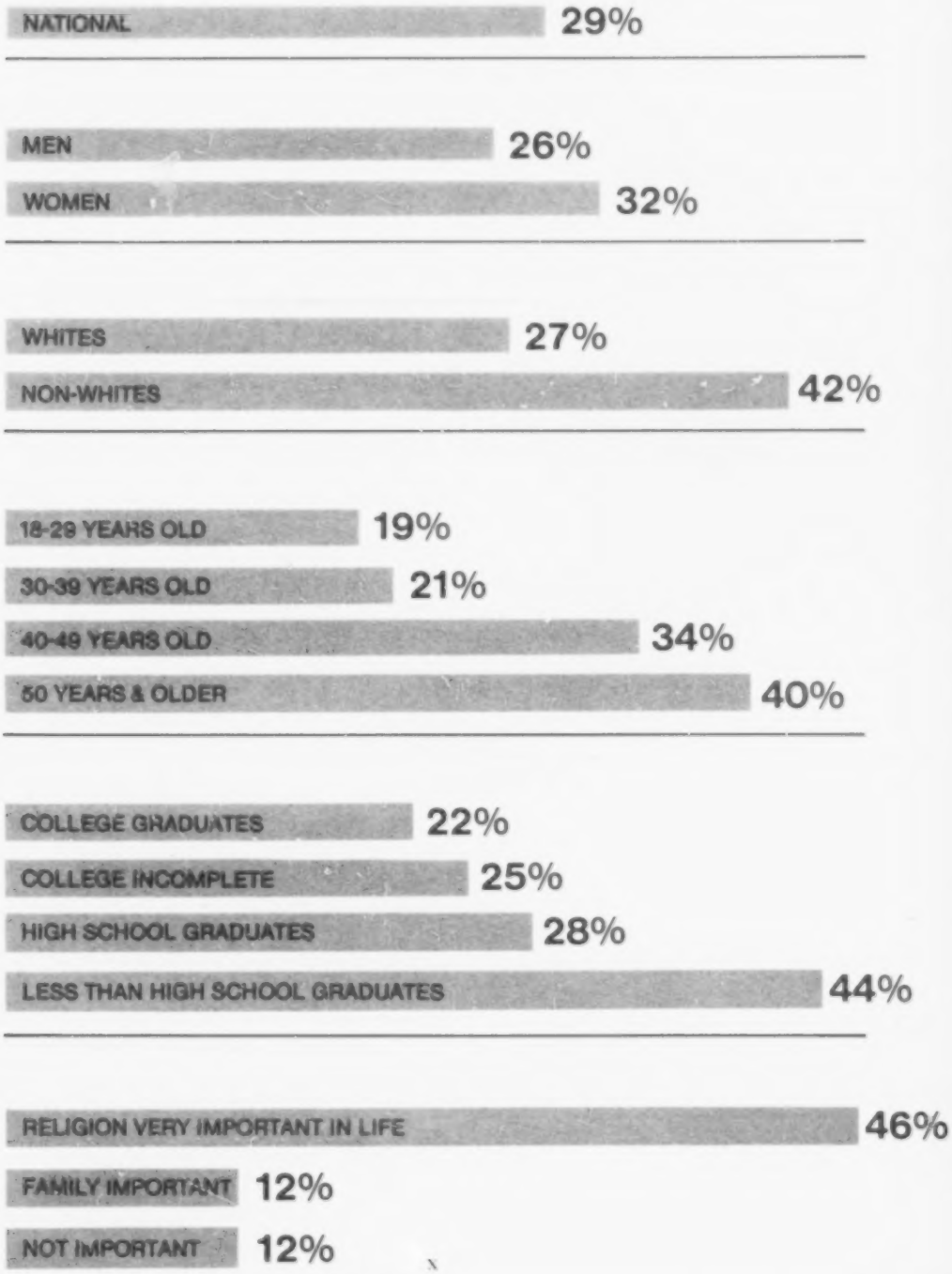
The relationship of each of the above to each question was examined. Relationships which were not statistically significant or meaningful are not reported in the summary of findings. Where the relationship was statistically significant, mention was made in the text. The reader should be cautioned that statistical significance is partially dependent on sample sizes; therefore findings based on small samples may be excluded. However, this does *not* preclude the possibility that were a larger sample analyzed the relationship might prove to be a statistically significant one.

A Note Regarding Analysis

In a survey which examines individuals at one point in their lives it is not always possible to measure the types of changes the concept of faith development may include. Therefore, evidence for or against the stated hypotheses is often indirect. Partially to provide for the lack of a true measure of change or development, two measures were used extensively: 1) the change in faith index, which is a measure of perceived change since age 16, and 2) the experienced a faith change measure, which is a self-reported measure of a significant change of faith at some point in one's life. While these two measures are self-reported perceptions at one point in time, given the consistency of response to the two measures, it is believed that they are a valid indicator of change.

PERCEIVED DEGREE OF FAITH

(Percent saying they have "a great deal" of faith)



Overview Of Key Findings

Hypothesis One: **The dynamics of FAITH DEVELOPMENT are different for men and women.**

- The proportion of men and women reporting some change in faith is approximately equal.
- However, there are differences between men and women worth noting, e.g.,
  - —Women are more likely than men to report their thoughts about faith were greatly affected by the death of a loved one.
  - —Women are more likely than men to report that a born-again experience affected their thoughts about the meaning of faith a great deal.
  - —Another event of greater significance to women than to men is the consideration of an abortion (whether it be for themselves or another).
  - —When faced with a problem women are more likely than men to turn to others for support. Men are more likely to prefer to work things out on their own.
  - —Women also are more likely than men to give thought to questions of faith and to attach importance to religion.

Hypothesis Two: **FAITH DEVELOPMENT does not occur at a consistent rate or in a uniform way throughout adulthood, but rather in varying patterns of activity and quiescence directly related to specific chronological periods of the ADULT LIFE CYCLE.**

- There is insufficient evidence to support or reject the above hypothesis.
- Most adults experience a significant change in faith at least once and possibly more than once.
- Among those who experience a change many report the change occurred within the past 10 years.
- Most report a change in faith occurred under the age of 30.

- There may be a periodic pattern to the experience of change, but the pattern for each individual cannot be generalized to adults as a group.

Hypothesis Three: **There is a relationship between periods of transition, change and crisis in one's life and his or her FAITH DEVELOPMENT.**

- There is a relationship between reporting a change in faith and key life events. Most significant are the following:
  —being lonely for a long period of time;
  —making a conscious decision to leave the church; and/or
  —receiving counseling for emotional difficulty.
- Those who report more faith than at age 16 are more likely than others to report experiencing:
  —the birth of a child (as a mother or father);
  —a born-again experience.
- Among those reporting a significant change of faith at some time in their lives, adults who report that the change has led to a totally different faith are more likely than others to report:
  —having a divorce;
  —being lonely for a long period of time; and/or
  —having a born-again experience.

Hypothesis Four: **FAITH DEVELOPMENT is positively related to one's involvement in organized religion.**

- The hypothesis is largely supported by the data:
  —Those who attended religious services at least once a month are more likely than non-attenders to perceive their faith as greater now than at age 16.
  —Similarly, church members and those who see themselves as more active in a religious group may be characterized as having more faith than at age 16.
- Giving a great deal of thought to various dimensions of one's faith is also positively related to participation and activity within one's church or religious group.
- Adults with less faith are less likely than the unchanged group to be involved in a religious class or study group or to attend a religious service.

Hypothesis Five: **FAITH DEVELOPMENT is positively related to one's involvement in social issues and concerns.**

- Adults with more faith than at age 16 are more likely than those characterized as unchanged or as having less faith to report volunteering time to help the needy.
- Those who indicate some change since age 16, regardless of the direction of change, are more likely than adults who see themselves at the same point now as at age 16 to report involvement in political or community action projects.

- With respect to discussion of political or social issues or the study of social problems, there is no difference between adults who report a change and those who do not.

- Those who report a significant change in faith are more likely than those who have not had such an experience to report studying one or more major social problems either alone or with others.

Hypothesis Six: **FAITH DEVELOPMENT involves struggle leading to both cognitive and affective change.**

- About half of those who experience a change in faith do not perceive it as leading to a totally different faith; rather they see their faith as only a little different.

- Most adults who experience a change describe their new faith as stronger and more meaningful.

- Adults experiencing a change in faith are about evenly divided between those who see it coming about as a result of thought and discussion vs. those who see it as coming about through a strong emotional experience.

- Six in 10 report their change in faith came at a time when life was stable or normal; four in 10 describe the change as coming during turbulent times.

Hypothesis Seven: **FAITH DEVELOPMENT is positively related to one's involvement in educational experiences.**

- Those reporting a significant faith change are somewhat more likely to:
  —participate in a class or study group at a church or synagogue;
  —have studied one or more major social problems; and/or
  —have read a book dealing with finding meaning in life.

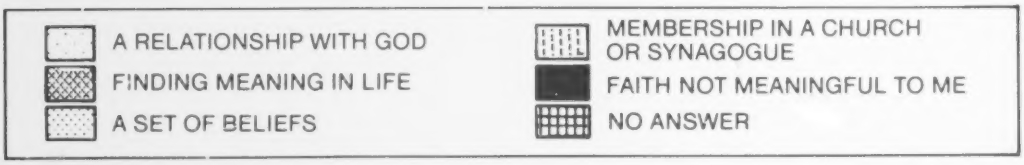
- A change in faith is also related to reading the Bible or studying religious topics.

- Those with less formal education are more likely than the better-educated to report having more faith in their adult lives than at age 16.

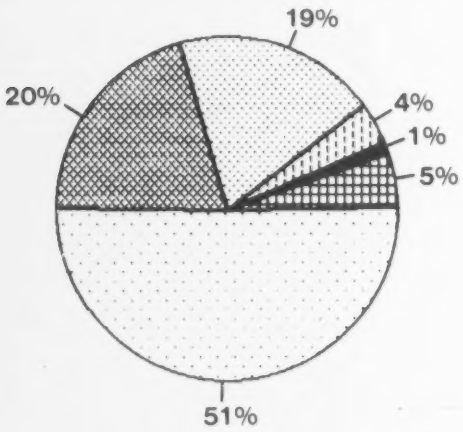
- Those with higher levels of education are more likely to believe that faith should change.

ONE'S VIEW OF FAITH

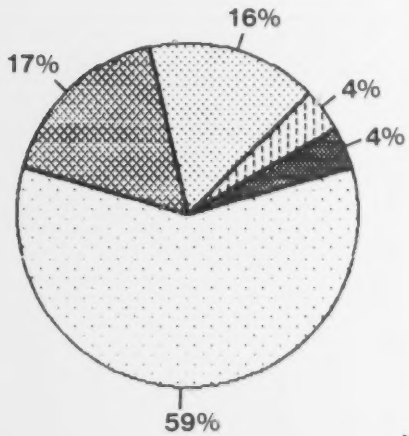
Which statement comes closest?


A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
FINDING MEANING IN LIFE
A SET OF BELIEFS
MEMBERSHIP IN A CHURCH OR SYNAGOGUE
FAITH NOT MEANINGFUL TO ME
NO ANSWER

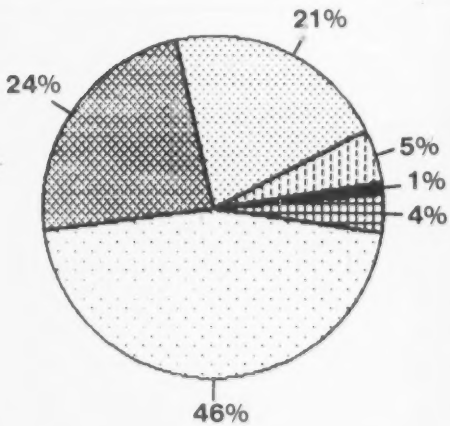
NATIONAL



PROTESTANTS



CATHOLICS



I. The Dimensions of Faith

This section reports the results of questions which were designed to explore some of the dimensions along which faith varies. The dimensions examined were:

Salience: How much do people think about their faith?

Content: How do people define their faith?

Level: How much faith do people think they have?

Salience Of Faith

Question 7: *How much have you* thought *about each of the following during the past two years: A lot, a fair amount, only a little, or not at all?*
Your relation to God.
Living a worthwhile life.
Developing your faith.
The basic meaning and value of your life.

A majority of adults (67%) report giving a lot of thought during the past 2 years to living a worthwhile life. A majority also report giving a lot of thought to their relation to God (59%) and/or the basic meaning and value of their lives (58%). Slightly less than half (47%) report giving a lot of thought in the past 2 years to developing their faith.

At the other extreme, fewer than one adult in 10 says he or she gives no thought to most of these questions.

Table 1

Amount of thought	Living a worthwhile life	Your relation to God	The basic meaning and value of your life	Developing your faith
A lot	67%	59%	58%	47%
A fair amount	20	20	24	21
Only a little	9	15	13	20
Not at all	3	5	4	11
No opinion	1	1	1	1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Own View Of "Faith"

Question 8: *Which one of the following four statements comes closest to your own view of "faith"?*
A set of beliefs.
Membership in a church or synagogue.
Finding meaning in life.
A relationship with God.

For a little more than half (51%) the definition of faith that comes closest to their own view is a relationship with God. One in five (20%) view faith as finding meaning in life, and about an equal proportion (19%) view faith as a set of beliefs. In the minority are 4% of all adults who view faith as membership in a church or synagogue. Finally, 1% volunteered the idea that faith was not meaningful to them.

With respect to the demographic characteristics of those who hold one view rather than another the following may be observed:

- Women are more likely than men to see faith as a relationship with God. Although the most frequent response for men, as well as for women, is a relationship with God, men are more likely than women to define faith as a set of beliefs (24% of the men compared with 15% of the women choose this option).

- Older adults, 40 years of age or more, are more likely than younger adults to view faith as a relationship with God, or membership in a church or synagogue. Younger adults are more likely to see faith as a set of beliefs or finding meaning in life.

- The less educated are more likely than those with more years of schooling to view faith as a relationship with God or membership in a church or synagogue. Those with a higher education are more likely than others to see faith as a set of beliefs.

- Those who identify themselves as Protestants are more likely than others to report faith is a relationship with God. Among those whose religious preference is Catholic or Jewish, finding meaning in life or a set of beliefs is more likely to be mentioned when compared with the proportion of Protestants selecting each of these two choices.

- Regionally, those in the South are also more likely than those in other areas to view faith as a relationship with God.

Church members, particularly those who are more active now than they were in the past, are most likely to adhere to definition of faith as a relationship with God. Among non-church members, there is less consensus regarding the definition of faith they adhere to—i.e., no one of the four possible definitions given them is endorsed by a majority.

Table 2

Own View Of "Faith"

	A relationship W/God	Finding meaning in life	A set of beliefs	Church/ synagogue member	Not meaningful	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%	%
National	51	20	19	4	1	5
Men	44	21	24	3	2	6
Women	57	19	15	5	1	3
Under 30 years	45	25	22	1	1	6
30–39 years	44	24	25	3	1	3
40–49 years	56	21	16	2	*	5
50 & older	58	14	15	7	2	4
College grads.	42	21	29	1	1	6
College inc.	46	19	25	1	1	8
H.S. grads.	51	22	16	6	1	4
Less than H.S. grads.	65	14	10	7	2	2
Protestants	59	17	16	4	*	4
Catholics	46	24	21	5	1	4
Jews	27	29	31	*	*	13
Other	48	16	24	2	2	8
None	20	34	33	*	5	8
East	43	22	22	5	*	8
Midwest	47	23	20	5	1	4
South	64	16	13	2	2	3
West	46	20	26	2	1	5
Church member	63	15	13	5	*	4
More active	69	13	10	6	*	2
Less active	58	19	14	5	*	4
No change	54	15	18	4	1	8
Non-member	36	26	29	2	2	5
Less active	36	18	37	2	1	6
No change	25	34	27	4	7	3

*Less than one percent.

Perceived Degree Of Faith

Questions 9 & 10: *Imagine a 5-point scale, where 1 is a person you would describe as having little or no faith, and 5 is a person with a great deal of faith. Where would you place yourself on this scale?*

Using the same 5-point scale, where would you place yourself at about the age of 16?

Adults were asked to rate themselves on a 5-point scale with respect to the extent of their faith. They were also asked to rate their faith at age 16. The average rating given for one's current level of faith is 3.7 (in which 5 represents a great deal of faith) Few (11%) place themselves on the low end of the scale (i.e., a rating of 1 or 2).

With regard to their perception of faith at age 16, the average rating given is lower—2.9. Furthermore, four in 10 (40%) rate themselves on the low end of the scale at the age of 16. When present position is compared with position at age 16, it is found that 52% rate themselves higher currently than they did at age 16—i.e., have more faith; and one in six (16%) rate themselves lower currently—i.e., have less faith. The remainder (30%) place themselves at the same point at both times of their lives.

Table 3

Extent of faith	Rating at age 16	Current rating
5 - A great deal	17%	29%
4	15	27
3	27	33
2	21	7
1 - Little or no faith	19	4
No opinion	1	*
	100%	100%
Average Rating	2.9	3.7

If one compares the proportion of adults reporting they had a great deal of faith (scale score 5) at age 16 with the proportion who report a great deal of faith at the current time, the following may be observed:

- For virtually all demographic groups a larger proportion report a great deal of faith now than report the same degree of faith at age 16.
- The increase in the proportion of non-whites with a great deal of faith is greater than the increase for whites.
- The increase is greater for older, 40 & older, adults than for younger, under 40, adults.
- Those with less formal education are more likely than the better-educated to show an increase in the proportion reporting a great deal of faith. Relatedly, the greatest increase within income groups is among those in lower-income households.
- An increase in the proportion reporting a great deal of faith now as compared to age 16 is also associated with reporting greater activity within one's church or religious group.
- As one might anticipate, for those who regard religion as very important the increase in the proportion reporting a great deal of faith is substantial. For others there is little or no change.

Table 4

Proportion Reporting A . . .

	Great deal of faith at age 16	Great deal of faith currently	Difference in percentage points
	%	%	
National	17	29	+ 12
Men	15	26	+ 11
Women	19	32	+ 13
Whites	17	27	+ 10
Non-whites	20	42	+ 22
Under 30 years	12	19	+ 7
30–39 years	12	21	+ 9
40–49 years	19	34	+ 15
50 & older	22	40	+ 18
College graduates	16	22	+ 6
College incomplete	15	25	+ 10
High school graduates	18	28	+ 10
Less than high school grads.	18	34	+ 16
$40,000 & over	17	24	+ 7
$30,000–$39,999	15	20	+ 5
$20,000–$29,999	13	23	+ 10
$10,000–$19,999	19	31	+ 12
Under $10,000	17	37	+ 20
Church member	17	35	+ 18
More active	11	34	+ 23
Less active	20	33	+ 13
No change	26	40	+ 14
Non-member	19	22	+ 3
Less active	21	22	+ 1
No change	21	17	− 4
Importance of religion			
Very important	23	46	+ 23
Fairly important	10	12	+ 2
Not important	15	12	− 3

Importance Of The Belief That Life Is Meaningful

Question 12: *How important to you is the belief that your life is meaningful or has a purpose?*

Most adults (70%) report that the belief that life is meaningful or has a purpose is very important to them. This finding is not surprising (the position that life is meaningless or purposeless is a difficult philosophical position for most of the population to hold). Nevertheless, there is a small segment (5%) who report the belief that life is meaningful is fairly unimportant or not important to them.

Women and non-whites are more likely than men or white adults to attach a high degree of importance to the belief that life is meaningful. Furthermore, those who report a change in their faith, or report greater faith now than at age 16, are more likely than others to consider the belief that their life is meaningful or has a purpose is very important.*

Table 5

Importance Of Belief That Life Is Meaningful Or Has A Purpose

	Very important	Fairly important	Fairly unimportant	Not important
	%	%	%	%
National	70	25	4	1
Men	63	31	4	2
Women	76	20	3	1
Whites	67	27	4	2
Non-whites	84	12	3	1
Experienced change				
Yes	73	23	3	1
No	62	29	6	3
Change in faith				
More faith	75	21	3	1
No change	65	27	5	3
Less faith	61	33	5	1

*There is a correlation between the importance attached to religion and the importance attached to belief in the meaningfulness of life. Those who regard one as important also tend to view the other as important.

II. Perceptions Of Change

The following series of questions measures adults' perceptions of faith and change in faith. Specifically, it reports the extent to which adults recognize that faith is a developmental process rather than a static state. This section also reports on adults' perception of the implications of questioning one's beliefs.

Perception Of Whether Faith Should Change

Question 2: *I am going to read you two statements. Please tell me which one best describes your own opinion:*

A person's faith should not *change throughout life because it is the foundation for living.*

A person's faith should *change throughout life just as one's body and mind change.*

A majority of adults (65%) believes a person's faith should change throughout life, while only one in three (32%) believes faith should not change. These percentages are relatively constant among men and women, whites and non-whites, among different age groups and among different faiths. Adults with more years of education or higher annual household incomes are more likely than their less well-educated or less affluent counterparts to believe that a person's faith should change. Church members are more likely than non-members to believe one's faith should *not* change. And, regardless of whether one has experienced a change in faith, opinion concerning this point is relatively consistent. A majority of both those who experienced a significant change of faith and those who have not believe one's faith should change.

Table 6

Opinion Regarding Faith Change

A Person's Faith . . .

	Should change	Should not change	No opinion
	%	%	%
National	65	32	3
Men	66	32	2
Women	64	32	4
Under 30 years	67	32	1
30–39 years	68	29	3
40–49 years	62	35	3
50 & Older	61	33	6
College graduates	74	23	3
College incomplete	69	29	2
High school graduates	65	32	3
Less than H.S. grads.	51	44	5
$40,000 & over	73	22	5
$30,000–$39,999	68	30	2
$20,000–$29,999	68	29	3
$10,000–19,999	66	32	2
Under $10,000	54	42	4
Whites	65	31	4
Non-whites	64	36	*
Church member			
Yes	58	39	3
No	73	24	3
Protestants	62	34	4
Catholics	65	33	2
Jews	63	29	8
Other	81	15	4
Experience faith change			
Yes	67	31	2
No	60	34	6

*Less than one percent.

Implications Of Change

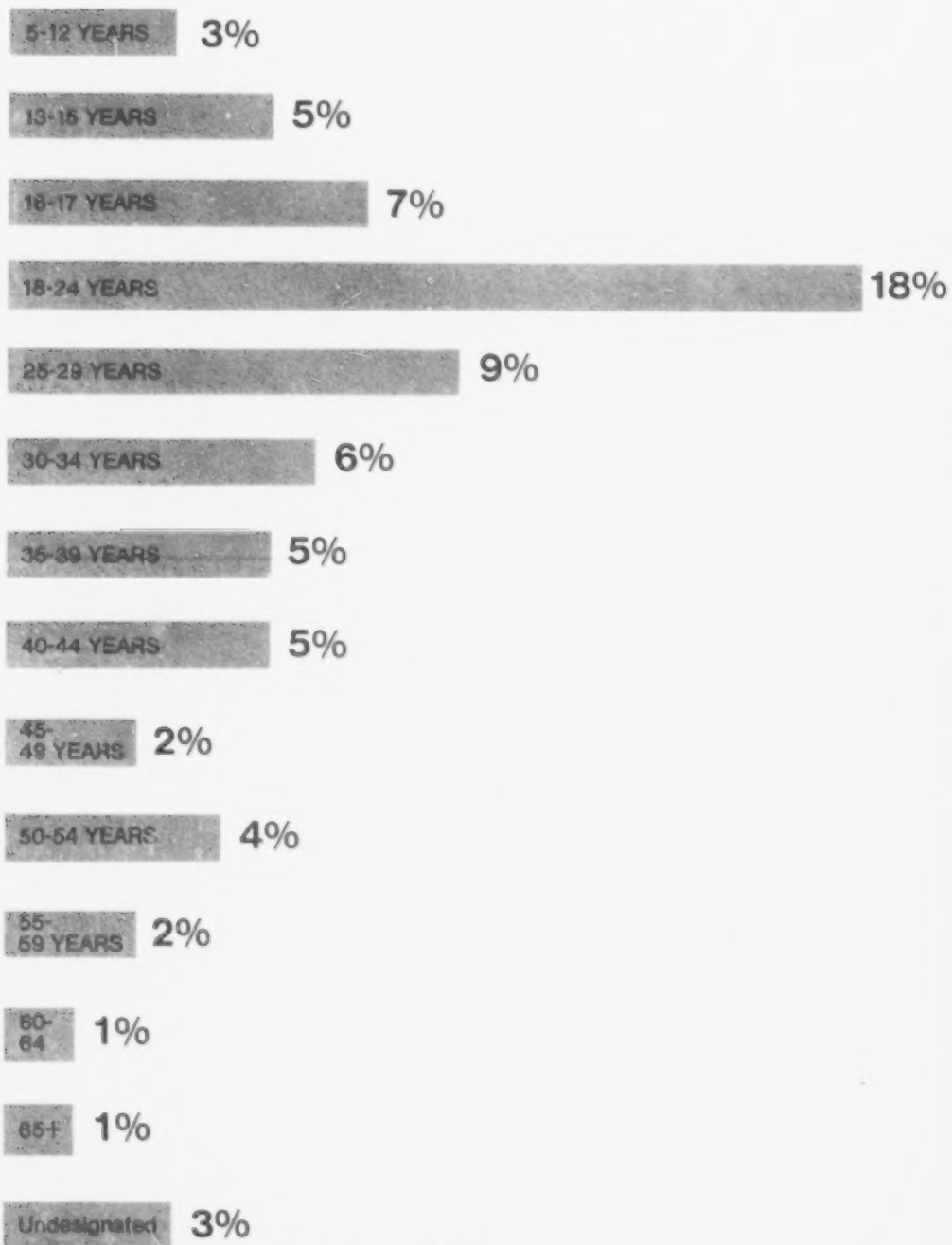
Question 15: *Now, which of these two statements best describes your own opinion:*
A person's faith is usually strengthened *by questioning early beliefs.*
A person's faith is usually weakened *by questioning early beliefs.*

Three in four adults believe a person's faith is strengthened by questioning early beliefs. There is a high degree of consensus on this point among all demographic groups. Even among those who do not believe one's faith should change nearly four in five (78%) hold to the position that faith is made stronger by questioning early beliefs. Those who may be described as having more faith are somewhat more likely than those whose faith is unchanged or those with less faith to see questioning of beliefs as leading to a strengthening of faith, possibly reflecting their own status vis-a-vis faith.

	Believe faith should change		Change in faith index compared with age 16		
Believe faith is...	**Yes**	**No**	**More faith**	**Less faith**	**No change**
Strengthened by questioning early beliefs	79%	74%	81%	69%	69%
Weakened by questioning early beliefs	16	21	16	24	22
No opinion	5	5	3	7	9
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

AGE AT WHICH FAITH CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY

(Based on the 71% who have experienced change)



III. Styles Of Faith

Styles Of Faith

Question 14: *I am going to read you some statements. For each I would like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statement using a 5-point scale. If 5 on the scale means you strongly agree and 1 means you strongly disagree, where would you place yourself? Remember you may use any number from 1 to 5.*

Another set of questions focused on the contents or attitudes that make up different styles of faith. The interest in these questions was prompted by James Fowler's work on faith development, and the specific wording of these questions was developed in consultation with a member of Fowler's team. It was recognized, however, that no effort could be made within the scope of the survey to test or measure Fowler's conceptualization of faith stages. The reader, therefore, should bear in mind that the present questions are concerned with styles of faith but have no direct connection with Fowler's concepts.

A battery of eight "agree-disagree" type statements was presented to respondents, who were asked to respond to each by giving a number ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 meant "strongly disagree" and 5 meant "strongly agree." The eight items and the percentages of all respondents who strongly agreed with each one are shown below.

	Strongly agree %
You have to go to church or practice religious ritual if you expect God to do anything for you	11
I sometimes wonder about the existence of God	17
God punishes bad people	18
God is the name we have given to the intelligence of the universe	29
People should just believe in God and not argue about religion	37
I feel close to God when I participate in a service of worship	44
God reveals himself through a variety of religious beliefs and traditions	46
The human mind can never fully understand God	50

These results can be thought of in several ways. It is interesting, of course, to compare the items with which relatively few respondents agree and those with which more respondents agree. The first four items—as we shall see momentarily—appear to deviate in one way or another from common religious understandings, while the last four are more typical of common views.

These items were also designed to capture other differences in styles of faith: simplicity vs. complexity, degrees of conventionality, degrees of relativism or openness, etc.

What follows is a brief profile of findings for each of the eight items. We have attempted to create a profile of the kind of person most likely to agree with each of the items. These profiles can be used to gain a better sense of what each item may have meant and what style of faith it may connote. The method used in creating these profiles was to look at strongly agree responses and to identify any subgroup in the sample who were especially likely to give this response to each item (e.g., women, those whose faith had increased, or whatever). In the tabulations accompanying each item we have reported, as a baseline, the percentage of the total sample that agreed strongly with the item, and then the percentages for any subgroup in the sample who were significantly *more likely* than the total sample to agree strongly. On this basis, we have also offered some speculations about the kind of faith-style that each item may signify.

You have to go to church or practice religious ritual if you expect God to do anything for you.

Respondents who were especially likely to agree with this statement include those for whom religion is very important and who think of faith as membership in a church. They are *not* distinguished by higher levels of church involvement or by higher levels of faith. Socially, they tend to be somewhat downscale in terms of education and income; disproportionately non-white, from the South, and rural; and tend to be older.

As an overall profile, this attitude seems to reflect a relatively simple, traditional or conventional view that is held by people who think religion is important but who lack resources or have not been challenged to think about faith in less institutional ways or to grow in personal faith. (See Table 7)

Table 7

	Strongly agree %
National	11
Selected Subgroups:	
Faith—membership in a church	25
Religion—very important	16
Non-whites	20
50 & older	17
Less than high school graduates	22
Income under $10,000	16
Southerners	15
Rural	15

I sometimes wonder about the existence of God.

Although the doubt expressed in this statement is not absent among persons with an active religious faith, it is most common among persons lacking an interest in faith and religion. Subgroups disproportionately inclined to agree with this statement include those who defined faith as finding meaning in life (as opposed to more conventionally religious conceptions of faith), those whose faith had declined since age 16, and those who are not religiously active and think religion is not important. Demographically, those especially likely to agree with this statement include persons with low incomes and low levels of education as well as persons who are divorced, separated or widowed.

If the previous question captures people with a rather perfunctory commitment to faith, this statement seems to express a perfunctory *disinterest* in faith. Certainly a lack of interest in faith is one style of faith that should not be overlooked. (See Table 8)

Table 8

	Strongly agree %
National	17
Selected Subgroups	
Faith—finding meaning in life	21
Religious activism—low	20
Less faith than at age 16	27
Non-member of church	22
Religion—not important	28
Less than high school graduates	21
Income under $10,000	27
Divorced/separated/widowed	26

God punishes bad people.

The profile for this statement is quite a bit like that for the first statement—indeed, both statements reflect an emphasis on good/bad, reward/punishment concepts. Here again we have subgroups who value religion highly, who define faith in fairly static and institutional terms, and who are downscale in income and education as well as non-white, from the South and single. People with more dynamic or complex conceptions of faith do not necessarily reject the idea of God punishing people, but this concept seems to be more characteristic of those with a sincere but perfunctory faith-style. (See Table 9)

Table 9

	Strongly agree
	%
National	18
Selected Subgroups:	
Faith—membership in a church	26
Believe faith should not change	22
Religion—very important	26
Southerners	26
Non-whites	39
Less than high school graduates	27
Income under $10,000	33
Single	25

God is the name we have given to the intelligence of the universe.

On the surface, this statement suggests an orientation toward faith that differs from traditional Judeo-Christian views. In the data, it is in fact those with other (i.e., neither Protestant nor Catholic) religious affiliations who are most likely to agree with this statement. In addition, this idea seems to have struck an especially responsive chord with persons who had experienced a change in faith that led them to a totally different kind of faith, with persons whose change in faith occurred between 10 and 20 years ago and who now consider religion very important but are not church members. This statement was also most likely to receive assent from persons living in the West, from persons with lower levels of education and from persons in modest (but not the lowest) income categories.

The profile here seems to be one of persons with an alternative faith style—perhaps best exemplified by persons living in the West who, in the late 1960's and early 1970's, adopted one of the so-called new religions or nonconventional spiritual disciplines. (See Table 10)

Table 10

	Strongly agree
	%
National	29
Selected Subgroups:	
Religion—other	46
Change in faith—totally different	35
Time of faith change—10–20 years ago	37
Religion—very important	34
Non-member of church	33
Westerners	34
Less than high school graduates	43
Income $10,000–$19,999	34

People should just believe in God and not argue about religion.

The profile on this question is very similar to the profiles for the first and third statements—e.g., persons who attach perfunctory importance to religion, but who are not especially active in it and who have a static, institutional view of faith. Again, the demographics of this profile point to older persons whose educational experiences have not in some way stimulated a more dynamic conception of faith. (See Table 11)

Table 11

	Strongly agree %
National	37
Selected Subgroups:	
Faith—membership in a church	49
Believe faith should not change	41
No change in faith since age 16	41
Religion—very important	44
Religious activism—low	41
Non-whites	54
50 & older	47
Less than high school graduates	57

I feel close to God when I participate in a service of worship.

This statement—of all the statements—most clearly captures the conventional churchgoer who is experiencing an active, deepening faith. Demographically, the subgroups that more often selected this statement are those that typically appear high on measures of religious involvement—older people, southerners, women, non-whites, and those with lower incomes and modest levels of education. In these respects, this group partially resembles those who, on previous statements, appear to have a perfunctory, static conception of faith. Nevertheless, the present group is actively involved in their churches and their faith is more oriented toward God, has become stronger (even though they think of it in static terms) and is apparently deepened by their experience at worship. (See Table 12)

Table 12

	Strongly agree
	%
National	44
Selected Subgroups:	
Faith—a relationship with god	62
Believe faith should not change	58
More faith than at age 16	53
Religion—very important	66
Religious activism—high	56
Attend religious services	56
Church members	57
More active in church	64
Protestants	50
Southerners	53
Rural	53
Women	50
Non-whites	60
50 & older	52
Less than high school graduates	60
High school graduates	50
Income under $10,000	57

God reveals himself through a variety of religious beliefs and traditions.

This statement is, in some ways, more relativistic than many conventional views of faith. It is, in fact, most often agreed to in above-average proportions by persons who are slightly post-conventional in their own religious views. These were persons who value religion highly, are still active in religious groups and who think of faith as a relation to God. They are, however, somewhat less active in church than they used to be, are in their forties and show some tendency to have experienced a divorce or separation. This statement, too, is one of the few that was not disproportionately selected by persons with lower levels of education. Also of some interest is that Catholics are more likely than Protestants to agree with this statement. (See Table 13)

Table 13

	Strongly agree
	%
National	46
Selected Subgroups:	
Faith—relationship with God	54
Religious activism—high	53
Religion—very important	55
Church member	50
Less active in church	58
Catholics	54
Southerners	57
Women	51
Non-whites	52
40–49 years	54
Divorced/separated/widowed	52

The human mind can never fully understand God.

This final statement also reflects a somewhat relativistic—open, perhaps humble—orientation toward faith. Those who agreed with it in greater-than-average proportions tend to view faith in relational terms (with God) rather than institutional terms and have experienced some significant change in their own faith during the past five years. They score high on religious activism but do not stand out on other dimensions of religiosity, such as valuing religion or attending church. They tend to be in their forties, include people from higher as well as lower education levels and are especially well-represented in the highest income category. (See Table 14)

Table 14

	Strongly agree
	%
National	50
Selected Subgroups:	
Faith—relationship with God	55
Faith changed in past 5 years	56
Religious activism—high	56
$40,000 or more	57
40–49 years	54

Summarizing briefly, these statements do lend some confirmation to the idea of different styles of faith. At least five such styles appear evident even in these relatively simple kinds of results: (1) the perfunctory orientation that recognizes the value of faith, regards it in static institutional terms, and appears neither to be actively involved in a dynamic faith community nor growing toward a deeper understanding of faith; (2) the skeptical style that questions the reality of God and, in dismissing religion, also appears not to be challenged toward a deeper faith; (3) the alternatively religious who have opted out of conventional forms but are experiencing some faith development through other spiritual disciplines; (4) the conventional style that follows traditional institutional lines and yet is actively involved and experiencing a deepening relation to God; and (5) the relativistic approach that is associated with perhaps a slightly less active institutional commitment but nevertheless is linked to some form of faith community, is dynamic, and involves some recognition of the limits of either religious tradition or human intellect in expressing faith.

These, of course, are speculative conclusions that may venture beyond a strict interpretation of the statistics. They are offered as tentative ideas for the purpose of stimulating discussion.

IV. Personal Experience And Faith Change

In order to obtain some insight into the process of faith development, adults were questioned about their own perception of changes in their faith. In a study which measures behavior at one point in time it is not possible to measure the process of development directly. Therefore, adults were asked to reflect on the past and describe the types of experiences they associated with a significant change in their faith.

Time At Which Faith Changed

Question 16: *In terms of your own definition of "faith," would you say your faith changed significantly in the past 5 years,*

In the past 6–10 years,

In the past 10–20 years,

More than 20 years ago or never?

Consistent with earlier findings regarding the degree of one's faith currently compared with age 16, about seven in 10 adults, when questioned directly, report that their faith changed significantly at some point. Most adults experiencing a change report it happening once; however, 5% of all adults report more than one significant change in their faith.

Among those reporting a significant change in faith a majority indicate that the change took place within the past 10 years (whether this is a true indication of the time of change or a function of respondent's ability to recall, however, is difficult to determine).

Furthermore, while few mention more than one such change, it would appear that such experiences may occur several times in one's life. The large proportion within each age category reporting a change approximately 10 years earlier, on average, supports the view. There is no reason to believe that the under 30-year-old respondent who reports a change of faith at 18 years is not likely to undergo a change again by the time he or she turns 40, just as those in their 40's report a change of faith in their 30's.

Table 15

Experienced a change in faith	National	Age of Respondent: Under 30	30–39 yrs.	40–49 yrs.	50 & older
Yes (total)	71%	80%	77%	68%	62%
Within the past . . .					
5 Years	31	54	30	27	14
6–10 years	20	22	28	17	15
10–20 years	16	10	24	14	16
More than 20 years ago	12	2	6	14	22
	79*	88*	88*	72*	67*
Never	29	20	23	32	38
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Adds to more than total experiencing change because some people named more than one period of time.

Age At Which Change In Faith Occurred

Question 17: *About how old were you when your faith changed significantly?*

The average age at which adults report a significant change in faith is 28 years. Fifteen percent report a change before their 18th birthday. Another 18% report the change occurred somewhere between the ages of 18 and 24. Few report a change in faith in their later years.

Table 16

Age at which experience occurred	All adults	Current age	All adults
5 to 12 years	3%		
13 to 15 years	5		
16 to 17 years	7		
18 to 24 years	18	18 to 24 years	15%
25 to 29 years	9	25 to 29 years	12
30 to 34 years	6	30 to 34 years	12
35 to 39 years	5	35 to 39 years	10
40 to 44 years	5	40 to 44 years	8
45 to 49 years	2	45 to 49 years	5
50 to 54 years	4	50 to 54 years	8
55 to 59 years	2	55 to 59 years	7
60 to 64 years	1	60 to 64 years	9
65 & older	1	65 & older	12
Undesignated	3	Undesignated	2
Never	29		
Total	100%		100%
Average Age*	28 Years		42 Years

Question 18: *Which of these words or phrases best describes your faith as a result of the change?*

Is it stronger or weaker,

Less meaningful or more meaningful,

Totally different or a little different?

Generally speaking adults perceive a change in faith as a positive experience. The majority experiencing a change report that their faith is stronger (82%) and more meaningful (81%) as a consequence. Perceiving the change as a strengthening or more meaningful experience is more characteristic of women than men, non-whites than whites, and those with less formal education than those with a great deal of schooling.

Church members, particularly those who see themselves as more active, are more likely than non-church members, to see the change as leading to a stronger or more meaningful faith.

It may also be noted that those who believe a person's faith should change are more likely than those who believe faith should not change to see the change they have experienced as leading to a stronger, more meaningful faith.

Finally, those who experienced a change in faith recently are more likely than those for whom the experience is not a recent one to report that their faith is stronger or more meaningful. One may, therefore, assume that the recency of change contributes to the perception of the change.

*Excluding Never or Undesignated

Table 17

As A Result Of Change Faith Is. . .

	Stronger	Weaker	No opinion	Meaningful More	Meaningful Less	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%	%
National	82	15	3	81	13	6
Men	77	18	5	76	16	8
Women	87	11	2	85	11	4
Whites	81	16	3	80	14	6
Non-whites	92	4	4	88	4	8
College graduates	72	22	6	74	21	5
College inc.	79	18	3	79	16	5
High school grads.	87	11	2	84	10	6
Less than H.S. grads.	89	8	3	84	*	9
Religious activism						
Church member	90	*	3	87	*	6
More active	97	2	1	92	3	5
Less active	80	15	5	79	15	6
No change	90	*	3	82	6	12
Non-member	74	22	4	75	19	6
Less active	65	31	4	68	26	6
No change	67	26	*	76	20	4
Faith should change						
Yes	89	10	1	87	9	4
No	79	17	4	78	15	*
Time of faith change						
5 years	88	9	3	86	9	5
6–10 years	85	14	1	82	15	3
10–20 years	81	15	4	78	13	9
Less than 20 years	74	23	3	74	17	9

While there is consensus with respect to the strength or meaningfulness of the change, perception of whether the change has led to a "different" view of faith is not as one-sided. Taking for granted that any change, by definition, must differ from the previous state, respondents were asked whether their faith was totally different or a little different. Forty-five percent report that their faith was totally different and 49% a little different.

Table 18

As a result of change faith is. . .	National
A little different	49%
Totally different	45
No opinion	6
Total	100%

Question 19: *Would you describe the change mostly as coming about as a result of a lot of thought and discussion about faith or coming about as a result of a strong emotional experience?*

Asked whether the change came about as a result of a lot of thought and discussion or a strong emotional experience, again response is almost equally divided: 49% report the change came about as a result of a strong emotional experience and 46% as a result of a lot of thought and discussion. Again, there are few significant demographic differences. However, race appears to distinguish those who see change as an emotional experience vs. those who see it as a cognitive experience, as does education and household income (all of which are to some extent correlated, i.e., there is an association between race, education and income).

Table 19

Change Came About Through . . .

	Lot of thought and discussion	Strong emotional experience	No opinion
	%	%	%
National	46	49	5
Men	48	46	6
Women	45	50	5
Whites	49	46	5
Non-whites	32	62	6
College graduates	61	34	5
College incomplete	41	53	6
High school graduates	41	55	4
Less than H.S. grads.	45	47	8
$40,000 & over	58	35	-
$30,000–$39,999	51	43	6
$20,000–$29,999	45	51	4
$10,000–$19,999	42	56	2
Under $10,000	41	54	5

Question 20: *Would you say the change came at a time when your life was essentially stable or normal or, came at a time when your life was turbulent or chaotic?*

A majority (59%) report their change in faith came about during a stable time of their life, while four in 10 (40%) report the change occurred at a turbulent time. Older adults, 40 years of age or more, are more likely than young adults to report their life was stable.

It may also be noted that those who report the change was fairly recent are more likely than others to perceive the change as occurring during a turbulent time. Finally, as one might expect, those who report the change led to a totally different faith are more likely than those who see little change to report the change occurred during a turbulent or chaotic time.

Table 20

	Stable/ normal	Turbulent/ chaotic	No opinion
	%	%	%
National	59	40	1
Under 30 years	55	44	1
30–39 years	53	46	1
40–49 years	66	34	*
50 & older	64	34	2
Time of faith change			
5 years	54	45	1
6–10 years	59	41	*
10–20 years	59	40	1

*Less than one percent.

V. Life Events And Social Participation

In the belief that one's life experiences, behavior and attitudes were associated with the process of faith development adults were questioned concerning:

- Significant life events which they have experienced and their perception of the impact of these events on their faith; and
- Participation in voluntary activities.

Experience Of "Life Events"

Question 3: *During your lifetime, have you ever:*

Received a promotion or honor at work?
Had a baby (as father or mother)?
Had a divorce?
Experienced the death of a loved one?
Been lonely for a long period of time?
Had a "born-again" experience?
Been seriously worried about your health?
Been out of work for a long period of time?
Considered an abortion for yourself or someone close to you?
Made the conscious decision to leave a church or religious group?
Received counseling for emotional difficulty?

Virtually everyone has experienced at least one major event in his or her lifetime. The one experience shared by the largest proportion of adults is the death of a loved one (86%).

About seven in 10 (68%) report receiving a promotion or honor at work, and 65% have had a baby (as mother or father). Other events are experienced by a minority. The least frequently reported experiences are receiving counseling for emotional difficulty (14%) and considering an abortion for oneself or another (13%).

Table 21

Experience	Proportion of all adults who had the experience
	%
Experienced the death of a loved one	86
Received a promotion or honor at work	68
Had a baby (as mother or father)	65
Had a born-again experience	31
Been seriously worried about health	30
Been lonely for a long period of time	28
Been out of work for a long period of time	25
Had a divorce	23
Decided to leave a church or religious group	23
Received counseling for emotional difficulty	14
Considered an abortion for oneself or someone else	13

Impact Of Life Events

Question 4: *Please tell me whether the experience affected your thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life a great deal, some, or not at all.*

Although nearly everyone has experienced at least one major event in his or her lifetime, not all such events have a great impact on one's thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life. On the experience shared by the largest proportion of adults—the death of a loved one (86%)—a majority (58%) of those experiencing it report that it affected their thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life a great deal. Among those reporting having a baby, seven in 10 (71%) report the experience affected their thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life a great deal. Another event having a great deal of impact, though one shared by only three in 10 adults (31%), is having a born-again experience. Eight in 10 (80%) of those who have been born-again report the experience affected their thoughts about life's meaning a great deal.

At the other end of the continuum, while 68% received a promotion or honor at work, only one in four of these (24%) report the experience affected their thoughts about life a great deal. In addition, deciding to leave a church or religious group, an experience shared by 23%, is also reported to affect one's thoughts about life by relatively few of those having it (29%).

Table 22

Experience	A*	B**	C***
	%	%	%
Experienced the death of a loved one	86	58	50
Received a promotion or honor at work	68	24	16
Had a baby (as mother or father)	65	72	46
Had a born-again experience	31	80	25
Been seriously worried about health	30	49	14
Been lonely for a long period of time	28	53	15
Been out of work for a long period of time	25	39	10
Had a divorce	23	53	12
Decided to leave a church or religious group	23	29	7
Received counseling for emotional difficulty	14	39	6
Considered an abortion for oneself or someone else	13	49	6

Age At Which Life Events Occur

Question 5: *How old were you when this happened?*

The average age at which significant events reportedly occurred range from a low of 25 years for having a baby to a high of 38 years for being seriously worried about one's health. However, it would appear that the age at which an experience occurred has no effect on the extent to which the event affected one's thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life. Some events occurred relatively early in life. For example, 41% of those who were born-again report the experience occurred before their 21st birthday, a third of those who considered an abortion did so before the age of 21 and a third who left their church did so before the age of 21. Others, to some extent are more likely to be associated with one's later years. For example, 24% report they began to worry about their health after age 50.

Respondent's current age, in a few instances, does appear to be related to likelihood of reporting an experience that caused a great deal of thought. Younger adults, possibly because the experience is more recent or novel to them, are more likely than older adults to report that having a baby, a divorce or considering an abortion caused them to give a great deal of thought to the meaning and purpose of life.

*Proportion of all adults who had the experience
**Proportion of those having experience reporting thoughts were affected a great deal
***Proportion of *all* adults reporting thoughts were affected a great deal

Table 23

Age At Which Event Occurred

Event . . .	Under 21	21–29	30–39	40–49	50 & older	Average age
	%	%	%	%	%	
Received promotion	14	36	27	11	8	32
Greatly affected by	12	38	26	13	8	32
Had a baby	24	56	16	2	*	25
Greatly affected by	25	57	17	*	*	25
Had a divorce	9	40	25	16	6	32
Greatly affected by	10	42	29	14	3	31
Death of loved one	28	24	18	13	14	32
Greatly affected by	28	22	19	13	15	32
Born again	41	21	16	8	7	27
Greatly affected by	43	20	17	9	8	27
Worried about health	14	20	24	14	24	38
Greatly affected by	16	22	19	16	25	38
Unemployed for a long time	19	30	16	14	17	34
Greatly affected by	21	25	17	13	20	36
Considered abortion	33	32	15	10	4	28
Greatly affected by	40	37	14	7	1	25
Left church	34	28	16	11	7	28
Greatly affected by	31	32	17	10	8	30
Been counseled	21	29	22	12	7	30
Greatly affected by	30	21	28	12	8	29
Lonely for a long period	22	26	18	10	17	34
Greatly affected by	22	25	17	13	20	36

*Less then one percent.

Sources Of Support

Question 6: *When you are faced with a problem or crisis, like those in the previous question, to which of the following kinds of support would you likely turn for help?*

Share it with family.

Share it with close friends.

Discuss it with a class or a group in your church or synagogue.

Work it through on your own.

Read the Bible or other inspirational literature.

Seek help from a religious counselor.

Seek other professional counseling.

Seek help from a support group.

Pray about it.

As one might anticipate, the most typical response during times of crisis or when faced with a problem is to seek support from one's family (87%). Sharing one's problems with a friend is also a common action (73%). In addition, eight in 10 (80%) turn to prayer and two-thirds (64%) seek support in the Bible or other inspirational literature. It may be further noted that eight in 10 adults (80%) attempt to work the problem out on their own.

Formal sources of support, such as a support group (26%), church group (23%), professional counselor (31%), or religious counselor (40%), are mentioned much less often.

Women are more likely than men to seek support outside themselves or their family. Similarly, non-whites are more likely than whites to seek support outside the circle of family and friends. Non-whites are more likely than whites to seek support through prayer or inspirational literature. They also are more likely than others to look toward other groups or religious counselors for support.

Table 24

Sources of support	National	Men	Women	White	Non-white
	%	%	%	%	%
Share with family	87	86	88	86	88
Share with close friends	73	69	77	74	68
Discuss with class or group in church or synagogue	23	17	27	21	33
Work it through on your own	80	85	75	80	79
Read Bible/inspirational literature	64	56	72	61	87
Religious counselor	40	35	46	38	55
Other professional counselor	31	28	34	31	35
Support group	26	22	29	24	34
Prayer	80	74	86	78	94

Measures Of Social Participation

Question 1: *During the past two years, have you done any of the following?*

Volunteered time to help poor or needy people.

Regularly read a newspaper.

Discussed political issues or social problems with friends.

Participated in a class or study group, in a church or synagogue.

Studied, either individually or with others, one or more major social problems, such as peace, racism, sexism, etc.

Read a book dealing with finding more meaning in life.

Attended religious services at least once a month.

Served on a church or synagogue board or committee.

Been involved in political or community social action projects.

Involvement in voluntary activities and social issues was believed to be associated with change or development of one's faith. Therefore, participation in a number of activities, ranging from the near universal reading of a newspaper to the less common types of activity such as committee membership was measured.

Over eight in 10 adults report reading a newspaper regularly or discussing political or social issues. Six in 10 report attending religious services at least monthly. It may also be noted that a slim majority (51%) report volunteering time to help the needy. Other activities are mentioned by less than half the adults. It may also be noted that women are more likely than men to attend religious services, volunteer time for the needy, read books concerning finding meaning in life, participate in study groups and serve on church boards or committees.

Table 25

Activities participated in during last two years	National
	%
Read newspaper regularly	88
Discussed political issues or social problems	83
Attended religious services at least once a month	60
Volunteered time to help the needy	51
Read a book dealing with finding meaning in life	47
Studied one or more major social problems	41
Participated in a class or study group	39
Involved in political or community social action projects	32
Served on a church board or committee	23

VI. Religious Attitudes And Participation

The following section describes adults with respect to:

- The importance they place on religion in their life.
- Their participation in a religious group or organization.
- The types of personal activities they engage in to strengthen their faith.

Importance Of Religion

Question 11. *How important is religion in your life—would you say: not important, fairly unimportant, fairly important, or very important?*

Most adults attach some importance to religion in their lives. Nearly half (49%) report religion is very important and an additional third (34%) report religion is fairly important. However, there is a segment who regard religion as fairly unimportant (11%) or not important (6%).

If one analyzes the characteristics of those who attach importance to religion vs. those who do not, the following may be observed:

- Women are more likely than men to attach a great deal of importance to religion.
- Non-whites are more likely than whites to regard religion as very important.
- Placing a great deal of importance on religion is also associated with age, education and annual household income. Older adults, the less well-educated and those in lower-income households are more likely than others to report religion is very important to them.
- There are also regional differences, e.g., residents of the South and rural areas are more likely than those in other areas to report religion is very important.

Table 26

Importance Of Religion

	Very important	Fairly important	Fairly unimportant	Not important
	%	%	%	%
National	49	34	11	6
Men	42	36	14	8
Women	56	32	8	4
Whites	46	36	12	6
Non-whites	76	19	2	3
Under 30	40	42	13	5
30–39 years	44	34	14	8
40–49 years	48	36	6	10
50 & older	61	27	9	3
College graduates	38	33	20	9
College incomplete	44	37	11	8
High school graduates	51	37	9	3
Less than H.S. grads.	64	25	6	5
$40,000 & over	40	37	15	*
$30,000–$39,999	44	37	12	*
$20,000–$29,999	39	44	13	4
$10,000–$19,999	51	35	9	5
Under $10,000	65	19	10	6
East	46	36	13	5
Midwest	48	36	11	5
South	61	29	7	3
West	38	35	15	12

Evaluation Of One's Religious Experience

Question 13: *Would you say your experience with religion during your lifetime has been very positive, somewhat positive, neither positive nor negative, somewhat negative or very negative?*

A majority of adults consider their experience with religion to be a positive one. Adults are evenly divided between those who see their religious experience as very positive (38%) and those who see it as somewhat positive (38%). About one in 10 see their religious experience as negative, e.g., 8% report it was somewhat negative and 3% very negative. The remaining 13% take a neutral position.

Those who are most likely to be religious, e.g., women, non-whites and older adults are also most likely to see their religious experience as very positive.

Table 27

Religious Experiences Are . . .

	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither positive or negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%	%
National	38	38	13	8	3	*
Men	29	42	16	9	3	1
Women	47	35	10	6	2	*
Whites	36	40	13	8	3	*
Non-whites	57	27	10	4	2	*
Under 30 years	31	45	16	7	1	*
30–39 years	34	37	14	10	4	1
40–49 years	39	36	10	8	5	2
50 & older	47	34	10	6	3	*
Church members	52	37	6	3	1	1
Non-members	20	45	20	11	4	*

*Less than one percent.

Church Membership

Question 23: *Are you a member of or actively related to a church, synagogue, or other organization of your religious preference?*

Two out of three adults (66%) professing a religious preference report membership in a church, synagogue or other religious organization. Older adults are more likely than younger adults to report membership. Additionally, married adults are more likely than persons who are not married to be church members.

Among those who have more faith currently than at age 16, three in four (74%) are church members compared with less than half (44%) of those reporting less faith currently than in their youth. Finally, those who believe a person's faith should change are less likely than those who believe faith should not change to be members of a church or other religious group.

Table 28

Church members	Based on those with a religious background	
	Yes	No
	%	%
National	66	34
Men	63	37
Women	68	32
Under 30	56	44
30–39 years	66	34
40–49 years	69	31
50 & older	71	29
Married	70	30
Single	56	44
Believe faith should change		
Yes	60	40
No	76	24
Change of faith index compared at 16		
More	74	26
Less	44	56
Change	61	39

Change In Activity Within Church Or Religious Group

Question 24: *Do you consider yourself more active or less active now than you were 10 years ago?*

Among those stating a religious preference, about as many report that they are more active now in that group than they were 10 years ago (42%) as report that they are less active now (39%). Adults between the ages of 30 and 49 are more inclined to report being more active. In contrast, adults under 30 years of age or over 50 years are more likely than those between 30 and 49 to report less activity in their religious group.

It may also be observed that for both measures of change in faith there is a relationship to activity. Those who report their faith changed or who have more faith now than at age 16 are more likely than others to be more active in their religious group. Interestingly, the belief that faith should not change is also associated with greater reported activity.

No answer, one percent or less, is omitted.

Table 29

Based On Those With A Religious Preference Compared With 10 Years Ago

	More active	Less active	No change
	%	%	%
National	42	39	19
Age			
Under 30 years	47	44	8
30–39 years	53	28	19
40–49 years	45	31	24
50 & older	32	43	25
Change in faith index			
More than at 16	54	32	14
No change	30	42	27
Less than at 16	24	53	23
Change in faith			
Yes	49	38	13
No	24	40	36
Believe faith should change			
Yes	38	41	21
No	50	34	16

Question 25: *What sort of things, if any, do you do to nourish or strengthen your faith or sense of meaning in life?*

Pray or meditate alone.

Attend religious services.

Study the Bible or religious topics in a church class or study group.

Discuss personal problems with a pastor or other religious counselor.

Watch religious TV.

Read the Bible or other religious books.

Participate in a prayer group.

Deal with personal problems on your own.

On average, a majority of adults report engaging in four of the eight activities on which they were questioned. Most adults report they deal with personal problems on their own (85%). Relatedly, 83% pray or meditate alone. About two-thirds read the Bible or other religious literature (67%) or attend religious services (65%).

Less than half use other means to strengthen their faith. About four in 10 (44%) watch religious TV. Almost as many (38%) study the Bible or religious topics in a class or study group. Discussions with one's pastor are somewhat less common—31% report such activity. Finally, one in four (26%) participates in a prayer group.

No answer, one percent or less, is omitted.

Table 30

Strengthen faith by	All adults
	%
Dealing with personal problems on one's own	85
Praying or meditating alone	83
Reading the Bible or other religious literature	67
Attending religious services	65
Watching religious TV	44
Studying the Bible or religious topics in a class or study group	38
Discussing personal problems with pastor or other religious counselor	31
Participating in a prayer group	26
Total*	439%

*Total exceeds 100% due to multiple responses.

VII. The Hypotheses

The following discussion summarizes the survey findings as they apply to the hypotheses.

Hypothesis One: **"The dynamics of faith development are different for men and women."**

Comparing men and women concerning their attitudes toward faith and their experiences regarding change, we find no differences between the sexes (See Table 31):

- Men are as likely as women to believe one's faith should change over time.
- About the same proportion of men and women rate their faith higher than at age 16, lower than at 16, and the same as at 16.
- There are virtually no differences in the proportion of men and women who report a significant faith change.
- Among those who report a significant change in faith, there are virtually no differences between men and women in the perception of that change; e.g., women are as likely as men to report that the change led to a stronger, more meaningful or totally different faith.

Table 31

	Men	Women
Believe faith should change		
Yes	66%	64%
No	32	32
No answer	2	4
Total	100%	100%
Change in faith index		
More faith than at 16	53%	54%
No change	32	29
Less faith than at 16	15	17
Total	100%	100%
Faith ever change significantly		
Yes	70%	72%
Result of change		
Totally different faith	30	34
Stronger faith	54	62
More meaningful faith	54	61
No	30	28
Total	100%	100%

There are, however, notable differences between men and women on other questions. One point at which men and women differ is with respect to life experiences. However, it is not the nature of the experience that happens to be important, but the extent to which that experience affects the individual. Thus, it would appear that there are life events that are more salient to women than men with respect to raising questions about faith and life's meaning (See Table 32):

- The same proportion of men and women report experiencing the death of a loved one, but women are more likely than men to report that this experience affected their thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life a great deal.
- Among those who report a born-again experience, women are more likely than men to report that the experience affected their thoughts about the meaning of life a great deal.
- Another event of importance for women in turning their thoughts to the meaning of life is considering an abortion (whether it is for themselves or another). A majority who considered an abortion report it affected their thoughts a great deal, compared with fewer than four in 10 among men.

Table 32

Life Event . . .	Men	Women
	%	%
Death of loved one		
Proportion who had the experience	86	85
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	51	65*
Promotion or honor at work		
Proportion who had the experience	--	59
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	22	26
Having a baby (as mother or father)		
Proportion who had the experience	61	69
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	71	72
Born again experience		
Proportion who had the experience	28	35
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	75	84*
Been seriously worried about health		
Proportion who had the experience	26	32
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	50	49
Been lonely for a long period		
Proportion who had the experience	27	29
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	50	55
Out of work		
Proportion who had the experience	24	25
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	42	36
Divorced		
Proportion who had the experience	20	25
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	52	53
Decided to leave church or religious group		
Proportion who had the experience	19	26
Proportion who report the experience affected their thougnts a great deal	32	28

Received counseling for emotional difficulty		
Proportion who had the experience	11	16
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	42	38
Considered an abortion for self or other		
Proportion who had the experience	12	15
Proportion who report the experience affected their thoughts a great deal	38	57*

Women also differ from men in the kinds of support they turn to when faced with a problem. Women are more likely than men to report turning to others for support or seeking help in prayer or the Bible. Men are more likely than women to report working things through on their own.

Table 33

Source of support when faced with a problem	Men	Women
	%	%
Share it with family	86	88
Work it through on your own	85	75
Share it with a friend	69	77
Pray about it	74	86
Read the Bible or other religious literature	56	72
Seek help from religious counselor	35	46
Seek other professional help	28	34
Seek help from support group	22	29
Discuss it with group at church/synagogue	17	27

It also appears that women are more likely than men to reflect on their lives. More women than men report giving a lot of thought to living a worthwhile life, to the basic meaning and value of life, and to their relationship to God. Furthermore, a majority of women (57%) give a lot of thought to developing their faith while about a third of the men (37%) give this issue a lot of thought.

*Indicates significant differences between men and women

Table 34

Proportion giving a lot of thought to . . .	Men	Women
	%	%
Living a worthwhile life	61	72
Your relation to God	51	66
Basic meaning and value of life	52	64
Developing your faith	37	57

Women also differ from men in the degree to which they attach importance to religion. A majority of women (56%) compared with about four in 10 men (42%) report religion is very important in their lives. Women are also more likely than men to see religion as a positive experience.

Just as religion is more likely to be important to women than men, the belief that life is meaningful is also more important to women than men.

As a consequence of women's stronger religious orientation, it is not surprising that when asked which of four definitions of faith come closest to their own, women are more likely than men to choose a relationship with God. (See Table 36) Men, on the other hand, are more likely than women to define faith as a set of beliefs. (However, it may also be noted that both men and women most frequently choose a relationship with God.)

Table 35

	Men	Women
	%	%
Believe religion is very important	42	56
Believe religion is a very positive experience	29	47
Proportion reporting the belief that life has meaning or has a purpose is very important	63	76

Table 36

Comes closest to your own view of faith	Men	Women
A relationship with God	44%	56%
A set of beliefs	24	15
Finding meaning in life	21	19
Membership in a church or synagogue	3	5
The idea of faith is not meaningful	2	1
No opinion	6	4
Total	100%	100%

In sum, the results suggest that women are consistently more inclined than men to value religion and to ponder questions about the meaning and purpose of life. These results are compatible with those of other Gallup surveys that have asked men and women about their religious orientation. The results do *not* point to significant differences between men and women in terms of overall changes in faith. Men and women, however, do respond to faith changes somewhat differently and these changes may be triggered by different life events.

Hypothesis Two: **"Faith development does not occur at a consistent rate or in a uniform way throughout adulthood, but rather in varying patterns of activity and quiescence directly related to specific chronological periods of the adult life cycle."**

The most direct measure related to this hypothesis is the question concerning when, if ever, one's faith changed significantly. Adults were asked both to estimate the time elapsed since they experienced a significant change in faith and the specific age at which the change occurred. The reader should keep in mind that recall of an event, even a highly significant one, is not always accurate; therefore, estimates of when an occurrence took place should be interpreted with care. Nevertheless, the consistency of responses among all those questioned does lend credibility to the data.

On the surface, it would appear that a change in faith is likely to occur under the age of 30. A majority of those under 30 years of age report a significant change in faith within the past five years. Also, among those 30 to 39 years of age at least four in 10 report a change before their 30th birthday. It would appear, however, that fewer experience a change in faith in their 40's.

Table 37

All Who Experienced A Significant Change In Faith

		Current Age			
Faith changed significantly within . . .	**Total**	**Under 30 years**	**30–39 years**	**40–49 years**	**50 & older**
Past 5 years	43%	67%	39%	40%	24%
Past 6–10 years	28	28	36	25	24
Past 10–20 years	22	12	32	21	25
More than 20 years ago	16	2	7	20	36
Total	109%	109%	114%	106%	109%

Note: Total exceeds 100% due to multiple responses.

The preceding relationship between age and change in faith may also be observed when reported age of change is considered. Again, the general response is to report a change within approximately the past 10 years.

Table 38

Age at which change occurred . . .	Current Age: Under 30 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50 & older
Under 16	21%	6%	5%	6%
16–20 years	47	21	9	6
21–29 years	21	42	19	9
30–39 years		20	46	13
40–49 years			11	25
50 & older				26
Don't know	11	11	10	15
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

However, it should be acknowledged that the ability to experience a change in faith at any particular age is dependent on having reached that point in one's life. While everyone surveyed had passed their 18th birthday, only 36% had passed through their 49th birthday. Therefore, there is a greater chance for respondents to report a change in their earlier years.

Thus, if one controls for age of respondent there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that change is related to specific chronological periods in one's life. It is more likely that such experiences occur several times in one's life. Any apparent pattern is probably due to limitation in recall. The large proportion within each age category reporting a change approximately 10 years earlier, on average, supports this view. There is no reason to believe that the under-30-year-old respondent who reports a change of faith at 18 years is not likely to undergo a change again by the time he or she turns 40, just as those in the 40's report a change of faith in their 30's.

Hypothesis Three: **"There is a relationship between periods of transition, change and crises in one's life, and his or her faith development."**

The data suggest that while nearly everyone experiences at least one major life event—e.g., some key change or crisis—not all such events have an impact on one's faith, nor does everyone who experiences a particular event respond to it with the same intensity.

Those who report a difference in their current level of faith (compared with their faith at age 16) are more likely than those who are unchanged to report experiencing a number of key life events. (See Table 31)

The experiences that most clearly differentiate those who have changed from those who report themselves at the same level at both points in their lives are:

- Being lonely for a long period of time
- Making a conscious decision to leave the church
- Receiving a promotion or honor at work
- Receiving counseling for emotional difficulties

It should also be noted that age is related to experiencing life events; i.e., the older one is the greater the opportunity for an event to occur. Thus, those whose faith has changed may have experienced more life events simply because they are older.

There also are differences between those classified as having more faith and those with less faith. Those with more faith are *more* likely than those with less faith (compared with their status at age 16) to report:

- Having experienced the birth of a child
- A born-again experience

Those with more faith are *not* as likely as those with less faith to report:

- Considering an abortion for themselves or another
- Having a divorce
- Making a decision to leave a church

Other life events are not related to a reported or perceived change in faith.

Table 39

Life event	Change in faith compared with age 16		
	More faith	Less faith	No change
	%	%	%
Promotion or honor at work	69	72	62
Had a baby	69	56	64
Had a divorce	22	28	21
Death of a loved one	86	81	88
Lonely for long period of time	31	35	20
Had "born-again" experience	40	21	21
Been seriously worried about health	30	32	27
Out of work for long period of time	23	26	26
Considered abortion	13	22	10
Conscious decision to leave church	24	32	15
Received counseling for emotional difficulty	16	20	8

Those who reported directly that their faith had changed significantly were also asked whether they would describe their faith as totally different or only a little different. It would appear that there are some differences in life experience between those who report their faith is totally different and those who report their faith is a little different. (See Table 40)

Those who report that their faith is totally different are more likely than the others to report the following events:

- Having a divorce
- Being lonely for a long period of time
- Having a born-again experience

Table 40

	Experienced faith change		IF YES: Resulting faith was...	
Life event	No	Yes	Totally different	A little different
	%	%	%	%
Promotion or honor at work	64	70	72	67
Had a baby	66	62	65	64
Had a divorce	20	24	31	18
Death of a loved one	88	84	87	82
Lonely for long period of time	25	31	34	25
Had born again experience	17	40	48	27
Been seriously worried about health	27	32	32	28
Out of work for long period of time	25	26	28	21
Considered abortion	10	15	15	16
Conscious decision to leave church	10	29	32	25
Received counseling for emotional difficulty	9	16	19	13

In sum, the data support the idea of a relation between major life events and changes in faith. The present evidence does not allow this relation to be explored deeply, but it does point to the value of such explorations. Traumatic events such as sustained loneliness, emotional difficulties, divorce and decisions about abortions seem to be most closely associated with changes in faith. Positive experiences, such as having a baby or being born again do in fact seem to reinforce faith. Negative experiences such as a divorce or deciding to leave a church are associated with decreasing levels of faith.

Hypothesis Four: **"Faith Development is positively related to one's involvement in organized religion."**

As one might anticipate, those who attend religious services at least once a month are more likely than non-attenders to have more faith now than at age 16. (See Table 41) Simply belonging to a church also is associated with having more faith. In addition, increased activity in one's church is related to increased faith, i.e., those who report they are more active in their church or religious group than they were in the past are also more likely than others to have more faith.

Table 41

Change in faith compared with age 16

	More faith	Less faith	No change
	%	%	%
National	54	16	30
Attended religious services in past month			
Yes	63	10	27
No	38	26	36
Religious activism index			
Member of church	62	10	28
More active	72	-	21
No change	49	10	41
Less active	53	16	31
Non-member	43	24	33

When asked directly if their faith had changed significantly, those who attend religious services monthly are more likely than non-attendees to respond affirmatively. (See Table 42) However, whether or not one is a member of a church is not related to giving this response. Those who see themselves as being more active in their church now than in the past are, not surprisingly, more likely than others to report a significant change in faith.

Table 42

	Experience a change in faith	
	Yes	No
	%	%
National	71	29
Attended religious services in past month		
Yes	75	25
No	65	35
Religious activism index		
Member of church	71	29
More active	84	16
No change	46	54
Less active	65	35
Non-member	70	30

Religious activism is also associated with having thought more about developing one's faith and related issues, such as one's relation to God, living a worthwhile life, and meaning in life. (See Table 43) In specific:

- A majority of members of a church or religious group report they give a lot of thought to each—significantly more than among non-members.
- Those who report they are more active in their church or religious group than they were in the past are more likely than others to give a lot of thought to their relation to God, the basic meaning and value of their life, and developing their faith.

Table 43

	Living a worthwhile life	Relation to God	Meaning and value of life	Developing one's faith
	%	%	%	%
National	67	59	58	47
Church member	73	71	62	60
More active	78	78	68	70
No change	73	65	52	51
Less active	65	63	59	48
Non-member	57	44	52	31

Finally, with respect to activities with a religious orientation there is a relationship between one's position on the change in faith index and participation. Those classified as having more faith are more likely than others to participate in religious activities. Adults with less faith, for two of the three religious participation measures, are less likely than the unchanged group to be involved in religiously oriented activities, e.g., a religious class or study group and attendance at religious services.

Those for whom faith has changed significantly also are more likely than others to participate in a religious class or study group, attend religious services or to have read a book about finding meaning in life.

The clear conclusion from these results is, as hypothesized, that faith development is positively associated with involvement in organized religion.

Hypothesis Five: **"Faith development is positively related to one's involvement in social issues and concerns."**

There is partial support for this hypothesis in the data.

- Adults with more faith than at age 16 are more likely to report volunteering time to help the needy.
- Those who indicate some change since age 16, regardless of the direction of change, are more likely than those who see themselves at the same point now as at age 16 to report involvement in political or community action projects.
- Discussion of political or social issues, or the study of social problems, however, are not related to a change in one's faith.

With respect to the direct, self-reported, measure of change, it may be noted that the only statistically significant difference, on a social or political measure, between the changed and unchanged groups is with respect to studying a major social problem. Those who report a significant change in faith are more likely than those who have not had such an experience to report studying social problems.

Table 44

	Volunteered time to needy	Involved in political or community action projects	Discussed political issues or social problems	Studied major social problems
	%	%	%	%
National	51	32	83	41
Change of faith index compared at 16				
More	57	35	84	43
Less	48	35	84	44
No change	42	25	82	37
Experienced change of faith				
Yes	51	33	85	44
No	52	29	78	35

Hypothesis Six: **"Faith development involves a struggle leading to both cognitive and affective change."**

This hypothesis is the most difficult to test within the context of the quantitative survey conducted. However, measures of adults' perceptions of their experience of change in faith shed some light on the hypothesis.

Adults who reported a significant change in faith were asked to describe the change along a number of dimensions. Asked whether they would characterize their faith as a result of the change as totally different or a little different, opinion is about evenly split: About half (45%) report their faith is totally different and half (49%) report their faith is a little different. Thus, it would appear that for a little less than half of those experiencing a change, the change is perceived as a relatively major one.

Furthermore, most adults who experience a change in faith describe their faith as a result as stronger and more meaningful. Regardless of whether one sees the change as leading to a totally different faith or a faith which is only a little different; there is widespread agreement, by over eight in 10, that one's faith has become stronger or more meaingful as a result.

Table 45

As a result of change, faith is...	All who experienced a change in faith	Result of change: Totally different faith	Result of change: A little different faith
Stronger	82%	84%	82%
Weaker	15	14	16
No opinion	3	2	2
Total	100%	100%	100%
More meaningful	81%	85%	84%
Less meaningful	13	14	14
No opinion	6	1	2
Total	100%	100%	100%

With regard to the element of struggle involved in faith development, adults reporting a significant change in faith were also asked whether this change came about as a result of a lot of thought or as a result of a strong emotional experience. In addition they were asked to characterize their lives at the time as essentially stable or turbulent.

Adults are again about evenly divided between those who report that the change came about as a result of a lot of thought and discussion (46%) and those who report it was a result of a strong emotional experience (49%). Whether the change is seen as leading to a totally different faith or not is unrelated to adults' perception of the situation as either a thoughtful one or an emotional one.

With regard to whether the time of change was largely normal or not, about six in 10 (59%) report that the time was essentially a normal one, while about four in 10 (40%) characterize it as turbulent or chaotic. Furthermore, those who report their faith as totally different are more likely than those who see it as a little different to report that their lives were turbulent.

Table 46

Change came about as a result of . . .	All who experienced a change in faith	Results of change: Totally different faith	Results of change: A little different faith
A lot of thought and discussion	46%	45%	49%
A strong emotional experience	49	51	46
No answer	5	4	5
Total	100%	100%	100%
Change came at time of life which was . . .			
Stable or normal	59%	52%	65%
Turbulent or chaotic	40	48	34
No opinion	1	*	1
Total	100%	100%	100%

*Less than one percent.

In summary, the evidence seems, on the whole, to qualify the hypothesis rather than simply confirming or disconfirming it. Some people who undergo changes in their faith—perhaps about half—*do* experience struggle, turbulence and a major upheaval. The remainder *do not*. As might be expected, the more serious the change is the more likely one is to undergo struggle of some kind. But change can clearly be more gradual and come about less traumatically as well.

Hypothesis Seven: **"Faith development is primarily related to one's involvement in educational experiences."**

There are several measures of formal and informal learning experiences throughout the survey. Some of them have been discussed in conjunction with earlier hypotheses.

Supportive of the above hypothesis, those who report that their faith has changed significantly are somewhat more likely than those reporting no change to:

- Be involved in a class or study group at a church or synagogue
- Have studied one or more major social problems
- Read a book dealing with finding more meaning in life.

A similar pattern of response may be observed when these activities are analyzed by the change in faith index.

More informal types of learning situations, such as reading a newspaper regularly or discussing political or social issues with friends, appear to be unrelated to faith change.

Table 47

Done in past two years	National	Change in faith index compared with age 16			Experiencing faith change	
		More	Less	No change	Yes	No
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Read book finding more meaning in life	47	50	48	43	50	41
Participated in a class or study group	39	50	21	30	42	32
Studied major social problems	41	45	44	37	44	35
Discussed political issues or social problems	83	84	84	82	85	78
Read newspaper regularly	88	89	89	87	89	88

Another series of questions explored religously oriented learning experiences, such as reading the Bible or other religious literature, watching religious TV, and studying the Bible or religious topics in a study group or class. Adults who report they have experienced a change in faith are more likely than others to study the Bible or be part of a study group. (See Table 48) There appears to be no relationship between faith change and watching religious TV. Finally, those who have more faith than they did at age 16 are more likely to engage in all these activities to a greater extent than either the unchanged group or the less faith segments. (These results, of course, also lend further support to the hypothesis relating faith development to religious involvement.)

Table 48

	National	Experienced faith change		Change in faith index compared with age 16		
		Yes	No	More faith	No change	Less faith
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Read the Bible or other religious books	67	69	61	78	59	47
Study the Bible or religious topics in a church class or study group	38	41	29	49	29	18
Watch religious TV	44	45	43	50	42	29

One may also consider the relationship of formal education to measures of faith. Looking first at the change in faith index (See Table 49), the only notable differences among respondents with different levels of education are that adults with at least a high school education are more likely than those who have not completed high school to fall into the less faith category.

There is also a relationship between education and reporting a significant change in faith. Adults who have had some college education are more likely than others to report experiencing a change. Those with less than a high school education are least likely to report experiencing a change. Lastly, it would appear that the more education one has, the more open one is to a change of faith, i.e., there is a direct relationship between believing that one's faith should change and number of years of schooling completed.

Summarizing these results, it appears that educational experiences do influence faith development—but the nature of this influence, as should be anticipated, depends heavily on the *kind of educational experience*. Reading books about meaning in life, studying the Bible and religious books, and participating in religious discussion groups all seem to have a positive influence on faith development. Having more formal education, in the sense of going to high school and college, apparently makes one more open to the idea of faith changing, but for the public at large it seems, if anything, to result in less faith rather than more.

Table 49

	College graduates	College incomplete	High school graduates	Less than H.S. grads.
Change in faith compared with age 16				
More faith	50%	56%	54%	54%
No change	31	27	28	37
Less faith	19	17	18	9
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Experienced faith change				
Yes	74%	75%	70%	65%
No	26	25	30	35
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Believe faith should change				
Yes	74%	69%	65%	50%
No	23	29	32	44
No answer	3	2	3	6
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS— 10 SUGGESTED STEPS

The reader should bear in mind that many of these steps are based on conclusions drawn from the survey data by George Gallup, Jr. and his associates and are not part of the original study.

1. BE ALERT TO THE DIMENSIONS AND DYNAMICS OF FAITH.

A. THE DIMENSIONS OF FAITH

1. Faith is a salient issue to the general public: Nine in 10 of those interviewed said they had thought about developing their faith sometime during the past two years; about half said they had thought "a lot" about this.
2. For a little more than half (51%) the definition of faith that comes closest to their own view is a relationship with God. One in five (20%) views faith as finding meaning in life, and about an equal proportion (19%) views faith as a set of beliefs. In the minority are 4% of all adults who view faith as membership in a church or synagogue. Finally, 1% said that faith was not meaningful to them.
3. A majority feels their faith is relatively strong.
4. People who feel their faith is strong also are more likely to feel that life makes sense, that they are productive and happy, and that they could be more altruistic toward others.

B. THE DYNAMICS OF FAITH

1. Faith is something that changes: Most of the people in the survey said their faith had changed during their adult life. About half think it currently is stronger than when they were age 16; about a fifth think it currently is weaker.
2. People have mixed views as to whether faith *should* change, however. About a third think faith should not change as a person grows older; about half think it should.
3. Young people are *more likely* to have experienced a change in their level of faith than older people; much of this change is in the direction of growth.
4. Major life events, such as having children, illness, and experiencing the death of loved ones, have a decided impact on faith: virtually everyone in the survey had experienced at least one of these major events, and those who had were

likely to say the experience had deeply influenced their thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life.

5. Experiencing these kinds of events is often associated with an increase in faith, but a significant number who went through these events say their faith *decreased*.

6. Many people do *not* seem to be finding support for their faith or help during life crises from their religious organizations. When dealing with personal challenges, far more turn to private activities such as prayer, music, and inspirational reading, than to their religious community; even fewer seek help from religious professionals.

2. ENCOURAGE THE FORMATION OF SMALL FELLOWSHIP GROUPS.

Participation in discussion groups dealing with the basic values in life is consistently related to having stronger faith and the belief that one's faith has been growing. Therefore, it would seem clear that churches and synagogues need to "think small"—to encourage the formation of small prayer fellowship or Bible study groups.

In fact, survey evidence indicates that this trend is growing. Jim McManus in the *National Catholic Reporter* writes about "lay communities, or small Catholic groups" that meet regularly for liturgies, Bible study, and social justice work. They represent, writes McManus, "an important trend within the U.S. church . . . . They take religion, and the need for religious community, seriously."

Rabbi Harold Schulweis, a rabbi in Encino, California, noted in the proceedings of the 1973 Biennial Convention of the United Synagogue of America that "I find the synagogue too small, its horizons too narrow, its self-image too bent. There is such disparity between the promise and the reality that I find myself exhausted in disillusionment. The myths and visions that we have promised our children are untranslated in the synagogue . . . ."

Rabbie Schulweis bemoans the fact that "the impersonalism of the synagogue is by now a widely accepted truism," and suggests that "every effort at adult education, every theological reconstruction, every liturgical innovation, as important as they are, is premature. Where there is no community, there will be no theology. Where there is no community, there will be no reverence. How can we talk peoplehood when people haven't experienced people? . . . . The synagogue must be . . . divided into groups of families, into clusters of congregational families who pledge to celebrate Jewish life, to learn together, to grow Jewishly together."

This trend toward prayer fellowship and Bible study groups is interesting in light of the rapid growth of self-help groups in the nation, people coming together to discuss common emotional, physical and psychological problems. One estimate puts the number of such groups at 500,000. Sociologists speak of "bonding." Maureen Gallagher writes:

"Bonding is a sense of being with another or others. It involves a feeling of security. Some describe it as being on the same wave length as another. Bonding involves care, concern, compassion—a sense of oneness. Bonding also gives people the freedom to challenge one another to new understanding and insights and to experience renewed faith."

Many observers of the American religious scene are encouraged by the growth in these small groups involved in prayer and Bible study. Edgar Jackson, in *Understanding Prayer*, writes: "Whenever the church in history has been spiritually vigorous there has been small-group prayer activity taking place."

Columnist Michael J. McManus, in his column, *Ethics and Religion*, makes this important observation:

"The one difference I see between churchgoers and those with deep spiritual faith is that the latter meet frequently in small groups with others in fellowship, prayer and mutual support. In this setting, people can see the power of prayer and make the exciting discovery that God really cares about them personally."

William W. Russell, in the *Presbyterian Journal*, writes:

"The rediscovery of the small group as a method for nurturing and multiplying believers offers the local congregation the opportunity for spiritual and numerical growth that many churches are seeking today. Not since the introduction of the Sunday school in England by Robert Raikes has there been a more exciting possibility for growth and change among New Testament churches."

Eli Wiesel, in his book *Souls on Fire*, stresses the concept of encounter. "Every encounter quickens the steps of the Redeemer," he says. "Let two human beings become one and the world is no longer the same; let two human creatures accept one another and creation will have meaning. . . ."

3. ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO CHALLENGE THEIR FAITH.

The survey suggests that faith is strengthened if it is challenged. Not only should persons be encouraged to probe the questions of God, life, death, creation, good and evil, and the like, but to seek new meaning in their answers. Such probing can *only* result in strengthened faith.

In *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, John Westerhoff identifies four styles of *faith*: experienced, affiliative, searching, and finally, *owned faith*. The process of moving from each style to the next is similar to the movement from the dependence of childhood to the vigorous independence of youth to the realized interdependence of maturity. It is the appropriate role of faith communities to enable their people in this process, rather than impede them. Westerhoff notes that too often church leaders have trouble recognizing and accepting the *searching* style as a necessary part of faith-in-process. Too often it is seen in the negative context of *un*belief.

In *The Problem of Faith Development in Young Adults*, Robert Gribbon states that the characteristics of independence, questioning, search, and experimentation are common to almost all young adults at some point in their transition to adulthood. It is a normal aspect of development that needs to be expected and affirmed.

When Abraham Heschel, in *Prayer As Discipline*, describes the true motivation for prayer as a "sense of not being at home in the world," he employs it as an expression of the worshiper's complete insecurity when contemplating that God is, in a manner of speaking, exiled from a world where His Presence is ignored or even rebuffed.

Paul Little, author of *Know Why You Believe*, encourages people to come to a decision about their faith. He notes that "We live in an increasingly sophisticated

and educated world. It is no longer enough to know *what* we believe. It is essential to know *why* we believe it."

But religion is, of course, both of the mind and the *heart*, and the survey indicates that non-rational kinds of experience (prayers answered, a religious or "born again" experience, etc.) are often the strongest basis for belief. One might assume, therefore, that a faith built upon both rational and empirical or intuitive bases would be the strongest faith of all.

Local churches and synagogues can create experiences in which persons have opportunity to explore their own reasons, both of the *mind* and of the *heart*, for belief or non-belief. In this regard, it might be helpful to note the profound religious questions held by many people. In a 1982 survey for the Christian Broadcasting Network, conducted by The Gallup Organization, survey respondents were asked what three questions (from a list of 11) they would ask God. They are listed below in order of frequency of mention:

Questions To Ask God

- Will there ever be a lasting world peace?
- How can I be a better person?
- What does the future hold for me and my family?
- Will there ever be a cure for all diseases?
- Why is there suffering in the world?
- Is there life after death?
- What is Heaven like?
- Will man ever love his fellow man?
- Why is there evil in the world?
- When will the world end?
- Why was man created?

4. ENCOURAGE A SEARCH FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE.

The suggestion here (which closely parallels point three) is that religious educators and parents need to spend far more time in helping young people deal with the core questions in life, basic values, life goals and priorities. The survey shows widespread interest in exploring the meaning of life, but too often the home, schools, and even the churches and synagogues do not deal with this basic desire, treating only the more superficial aspects of faith. Yet if the core of belief is not solid, all else can easily fall away.

Religious institutions need to renew their efforts to encourage discussion of basic values in the home, for in the view of some social observers, our educational institutions are doing an inadequate job of imparting values to students. Dr. James Billington, director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, said in an interview in *U.S. News and World Report*:

"To a very large extent, American universities have fallen down on the job of transmitting values to students. Other institutions are also falling short, but for the universities failure is especially serious, because historically they have had the task of imparting the essentials of the Western tradition to the leaders of tomorrow. Now young people in the universities are generally offered a smorgasbord curriculum that fails to convey any sense of their heritage."

Syndicated columnist, William Raspberry, also deplores value-free education, but notes an optimistic trend:

"Now, at long last, the current crop of educators is starting to learn the obvious: Value-free education is a contradiction in terms."

He continues, "Many educators—perhaps even the majority—still imagine that their students will soak up, as through osmosis, a clear sense of right and wrong and that, in any case, morality training is not their responsibility."

What is needed, many feel, is a continuing discussion of basic values and an intense search for the meaning of life, leading to decisions that will govern one's life. Such a search is unique in the domain of the religious community. Methodist Bishop Ernest A. Fitzgerald writes:

"We live by that we believe ourselves to be. Either we are the blind victims of fate and we can change nothing, or we are the unique creations of God, who can use what we have to make a difference in our world. Each person needs to make a decision about this matter. Too manyof us muddle along with our energies unfocused. If we can learn to believe in ourselves—that what we have is important and needed—life will be an exciting adventure."

5. REMIND PEOPLE OF THE REWARDS OF AN ACTIVE FAITH.

As noted in point one, people who feel their faith is strong also are likely to feel that life makes sense, that they are productive and happy, and that they can be more altruistic toward others.

While the function of the clergy and religious leaders is to remind people of the *obligations* of faith as well as the *rewards*, it is important to stress the fact that a strong faith can have enormous benefits to the individual.

A 1982 study conducted by The Gallup Organization for the Robert H. Schuller Ministries shows that one's self-esteem or sense of self-worth is related to one's feelings of closeness with God, and a high self-esteem is related to having fewer health problems, closer relationships with parents and children, greater involvement in charitable activities, and to being more productive in what one wants to accomplish.

Furthermore, Gallup studies on spiritual commitment show that "highly spiritually committed" people tend to be more satisfied with their lot in life, to be far happier, to place greater importance on family life, to be more tolerant of persons of different races and religions, to be more concerned about the betterment of society, and, finally, to be more likely to be presently working among the poor, the infirm and the elderly than are their less spiritually committed counterparts.

People need constantly to be reminded of the rewards of a strong faith, and to note carefully the relationship between the amount of effort put into exploring the dimensions of faith and the strength of faith. Although a direct cause and effect relationship cannot be established, a recent survey on Jesus Christ (conducted for the Robert H. Schuller Ministries by The Gallup Organization in 1982) found that eight in 10 of persons who claim to have made the "greatest possible effort" to follow Jesus's example, say their relationship with Jesus Christ increases their sense of self-worth a great deal. In the Bible, Jesus' words are: "Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7.7–11).

Two great commandments of the Old Testament,

> . . . you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might (Deuteronomy 6:5)
>
> and
>
> . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18)

are combined in Jesus' statement of the great commandment which he illustrates with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Indeed, it might be said that the scriptures reveal a God whose ultimate concern is the liberation of the poor and the oppressed. Fidelity to such a God necessitates an *active* faith.

An essential part of the ministry of a faith community is the mediation of God's affirmation of others—it is the mediation of God's transforming love which is what makes possible a transformation of a person's perspective. It is when one feels profoundly loved and valued that one can risk.

6. STRESS GROWTH IN FAITH IN SERVICE TO OTHERS.

The survey found a close relationship between a strengthened faith and involvement in social activities and issues. With the recent major cutbacks in government sponsored programs of social services, increasing numbers of religious organizations—from the established churches and synagogues to the many emerging new forms of religious expression—see programs of outreach to others as *central* to the expression of their faith. For many, a *developing* faith—whatever its belief structure—is a *serving* faith.

Numerous surveys have indicated both a will to believe among people and, at the same time, a desire to serve society. The task of religious leaders is to join these two strong impulses.

Greater efforts should be made by churches to match church and community needs with the time and the talents of parishioners. In fact, a whole new set of religious vocations, for older persons as well as youth, could be developed. Such vocations could include a Help-Line telephone ministry, collecting and distributing food, organizing transportation systems for the elderly or handicapped, helping children learn how to read, and working with those who drop out of school. The list, of course, could be greatly expanded.

The desire on the part of youth for models for service is not limited to America. Young people in France told Pope John Paul II that they wanted to serve the church but didn't have models to adopt and follow. It clearly behooves all religious organizations to develop new and creative outlets for their youth, here and abroad, who are spiritually "all charged up but have no place to go."

The will to believe among young people, and their new interest in religion should be linked with their desire to serve society. Evidence that young people have a strong social conscience is seen in their occupation choices, which are heavily weighted toward the "helping professions"—teaching, social work, medicine and the like, and in their expressed willingness to give one year of service to the nation, either in military or non-military work. Most likely to favor such a plan are teenagers who describe themselves as "very religious."

Study should be given to various new forms of ministry, both formal and informal. We have para-lawyers, and para-medics—perhaps it would be possible to develop para-clerics, with persons given a certain amount of formal training enabling them to become more involved in the basic functions of a church.

Rabbi Harold Schulweis, in *United Synagogue Review*, describes his experience of approaching the Board of Directors of his congregation with a proposal to create a para-rabbinic group. He explained the similarity to para-medics who work with doctors to provide many basic medical services not necessitating a physician. He told them it would not cost a penny to organize or carry out. "I want your lives," he said. "I don't want you as my congregants, I want you as my colleagues because I need help and want you to share in my anguish, my discovery, in the widsom of what I have learned."

Rabbi Schulweis describes the program and indicates how often the non-professional and often relatively less threatening *para-rabbi* is able to reach and help persons who might feel intimidated by counseling with the rabbi.

A remarkably high percentage of Americans express satisfaction with the way things are going in their own lives. This is particularly true with regard to the most important dimensions—family life, relations with other people, health, and the quality of the communities in which they live. But at the same time there is a tragically wide gap in satisfaction levels between the top and bottom groups on the socioeconomic ladder. Those at the top need to find ways to reach down—in a loving, caring manner—not only to help those at the bottom but to give them fresh hope.

What is called for is a kind of crisis intervention on a broad scale, with high self-esteem people meeting and working directly with low self-esteem people. As columnist Andy Rooney put it, "If you have your health, some happiness, some money in the bank, you don't need help. The chances are you ought to be helping someone who does need help." The first step is caring in a deep way. If we truly care about the plight of others, we will do something—we will be impelled to action.

It is very difficult, however, to really care unless one comes face to face with people in need. We have to do more than spend money. Thoreau said, "If you give money, spend yourself with it." If those who serve on boards or committees dealing with human needs, for example, matched every hour spent sitting in the boardroom with an hour of direct, face-to-face involvement with the less fortunate, society would feel the impact and our committee work would be given new life. At the same time, experience has shown that those who begin working with persons in need soon find that they themselves receive, from the wisdom, patience, and endurance of the needy, far more than they give.

Nearly one person in three today *is* involved in direct person-to-person work with the underprivileged, the infirm, the handicapped, and the elderly. This massive volunteer effort, of course, is absolutely essential to our social well-being.

7. REACH PEOPLE AT A YOUNG AGE.

The survey, very importantly, shows that faith is not something static, but changes throughout one's lifetime. At the same time, however, changes seem most prevalent during the late teens and early adulthood.

Other surveys have shown that one's basic values tend to be set before the age of 20.

The chronological pattern is: Relatively high levels of traditional beliefs in the early teens, a decline in the late teens and early twenties, then a leveling-off as people settle down in communities and raise families.

An earlier series of Gallup questions, exploring religious beliefs among teenagers found that nearly half of older teenagers, 16–18 years old, have had a "crisis of faith"—that is, a time in their lives when they had serious doubts about their religious beliefs.

Having crises of faith does not appear to cause alienation from organized religion, with teens who have had such an experience as likely as their counterparts to attend church or synagogue regularly, and as likely to say religion is "very important" in their lives.

In view of the fact that values and religious beliefs and patterns tend to be established during the pre-teen and teen years, the clergy and religious educators should examine carefully the status of religion in the home.

Furthermore, it should be noted that one of the greatest differences between the churched and unchurched is that the former are more likely to have had religious training in the home.

Many religious leaders would maintain that the home, not the church or synagogue, should be the center of religious education. Yet the facts clearly indicate that many parents—including both those who are active and those who are not active in church or synagogue—are not doing their job.

It clearly behooves the clergy and others involved in religious education to gain insight into the conditions in the home in terms of religious training. Does the family talk about God and religion? Is the Bible read regularly? Does the family pray together? What is the nature of devotion in the home? Are efforts made to apply religious precepts to the formation of character in the home?

What do parents themselves know about their religion? Do they practice their faith? How do they deal with the tough questions asked by their off-spring? How many parents, especially if they themselves do not go to church or synagogue, can give a good answer to the child's question: "Why should I go?"

What is called for is a "team effort" between clergy and parents—to find out how religious institutions can complement and reinforce what is taught in the home, to educate parents, to educate youngsters and to aid in their spiritual formation.

Such efforts are likely to be welcome by parents, since both the religiously involved and uninvolved say they would like to have their children receive religious training.

Furthermore, this clergy-parent team effort would enrich the spiritual lives of families, improve relationships among family members and thereby help combat the trend toward the dissolution of the family unit in the U.S. In addition, such efforts would likely help reduce the problem of discipline in our schools—which consistently has been named the number one problem in Gallup surveys on education.

8. BE MORE SUPPORTIVE IN FAITH DEVELOPMENT.

Many people do not seem to be finding support for their faith or help during life crises from their religious organizations. When dealing with personal challenges, far more people turn to private activities such as prayer, music, and inspirational reading, than to their religious community; even fewer seek help from religious professionals.

Yet the survey findings clearly show that people are willing and eager to talk about their own "faith journeys."

Studies have indicated that churches should develop a greater system among their lay members so that the clergy can be free to spend more time in pastoral counseling. When unchurched persons in the study, *The Unchurched American*, were asked what would bring them back to the church, one of the key answers given was "if I can find a minister/priest/rabbi with whom I can discuss my religious doubts and needs."

There would appear to be a great need for spiritual counseling, given the widespread concern over contemporary problems in the world and feelings of loneliness and estrangement among large segments of the population. Indeed, one could argue that every individual in the nation needs a spiritual counsellor or a faith partner of some sort—a person with whom to share his or her innermost spiritual feelings—a member of the clergy, a friend, a husband or wife, a parent, or a child.

Because of the need for a spiritual counsellor or faith partner, the movement toward small fellowship groups in the nation is certainly an encouraging one. In view of the relatively low level of spiritual commitment among Americans today, it would certainly seem that few of us can "go it alone" in our spiritual journeys. "Faith grows best in the presence of faith."

9. HELP PEOPLE DEAL WITH/UNDERSTAND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES.

A remarkable and consistent one-third of the American people have had life-changing religious experiences that have had a major impact on faith development. Yet the fact is, many of these people are on a spiritual "high" but do not know how to deal with this experience. It is important for the clergy and religious educators to help these people understand their experiences and build upon them.

One of the least explored aspects of spiritual life in America is what might be described as the "religious experience"—an "other-worldly" feeling of union with a divine being or supreme power.

In 1902, William James made the first attempt to study this phenomenon, which he describes in his classic, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Now, by means of scientific surveys of public opinion, it is possible to take a more systematic approach to studying this aspect of religion.

From such surveys a surprising finding emerges. As many as one-third of adults, nationwide, report having had such an experience at some point in their lives. Also, most are able to recreate details of the experience—even the exact date of the occurrence.

Such an experience appears to have a profound effect on the outlook and direction of a person's life. Many recount experiences at the time of crises, often in answer to prayers.

One of the most interesting aspects of these phenomena is that they happen to the religous non-participant as well as to the participant or to those who say religion plays an important part in their lives.

The following question (or a similar question) has been put to representative samples of U.S. adults in seven Gallup surveys over the last decade:

Would you say that you have ever had a religious or mystical experience, that is, a moment of sudden religious insight or awakening?

It should be pointed out that the focus of the survey question is on religious experiences of a *sudden* or *dramatic* nature; the proportions who have had such

experiences would undoubtedly be higher if the question had been designed to include religious experiences of gradual nature as well.

The experiences described tend to fall into the following general categories:

1. An other-worldly feeling of union with a Divine Being, carrying with it the conviction of the forgiveness of sins and salvation.
2. Dramatic spiritual awakening related to nature (sunset, stars, the universe, life itself, etc.)
3. Experiences related to healing
4. Experiences involving visions, voices and dreams
5. A sudden insight and turning to God in a moment of crisis (death or near-death, war, car accident, etc.)

A somewhat broader question—asked in a Gallup Poll in 1985—elicited a higher proportion, 43%, saying they have had unusual spiritual experiences.

These experiences cover a wide range—from nature-inspired feelings of awe, to answered prayers, to out-of-body experiences—and generally have had a profound and positive impact on people's lives.

When the same question was asked by the Gallup affiliate in Great Britain, 33% replied affirmatively, a figure that almost exactly matches the percentage recorded in an earlier survey conducted by the Religious Experience Research Unit at Manchester College, Oxford (now the Alistair Hardy Research Center).

Following is the question asked in both the U.S. and Great Britain:

Have you ever been aware of, or influenced by, a presence or a power—whether you call it God or not—which is different from your everyday self?

Those in the U.S. survey who said they had had spiritual experiences were asked to describe them. Many felt the presence of God or received help from God. Others indicated the experience was essentially indescribable. Here is the full list:

Descriptions of Spiritual Presence

(Based on those feeling presence)

Presence of God	21%
Guidance, help from God	11
Indescribable feeling	11
Calming, comforting	10
Contentment, peace, well-being	7
At time of illness	6
Answer to prayer	6
Like E.S.P., intuition	5
Guardian	4
Gave me strength	3
Conscience	3
A light	2
All others	6
Don't know	5
	100%

These people were also asked what effect the experience had on their lives. The responses were almost invariably positive, with most saying it "strengthened my belief in God" (15%), "gave me strength for living" (14%), and "made me a better person" (10%).

Here is a list of responses:

Effect on Life

(Based on those feeling presence)

Strengthened my belief in God	15%
Gave me strength for living	14
Made me a better person	10
Had positive effect (general)	8
Made me appreciate life more	8
Had no effect	7
Made me more understanding of others	6
Made me a happier person	5
Gave me peace of mind	4
Helped me make decision	4
Helped in discerning right from wrong	4
Gave me hope	3
Improved family	3
Made me thankful	2
Made me reassess my life	2
Gave me more self confidence	2
Made me feel more religious	2
All others	6
Don't know	10
	115%*

*Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

The late Sir Alistair Hardy, an 89-year-old British marine biologist, earlier this year received the Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion for his collection and analysis of extraordinary religious experiences. It was Sir Alistair's hope that studies on religious and spiritual experiences will help reduce tension and struggle among various religions in the world, as people come to realize they are all part of the same God.

THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

Among the spiritual experiences recorded are what are called near-death experiences. A 1981 Gallup Poll showed that 15% of the adult population had had an unusual experience on the verge of death or when they had had a close call. Perhaps one-third of this group, in turn, had had what is described as a near-death experience. This is how psychologist Dr. Kenneth Ring describes such experiences (in an interview in *U.S. News and World Report*):

"These people tell of a common pattern of experience: A sense of extreme peace and well-being, a sense of being separated from the physical body. They speak of being able to gaze down at their physical body as if they were spectators. There's often a sense of moving through a dark space—sometimes described as a tunnel—and encountering a beautiful, warm, brilliant light that seems to engulf and surround the individual."

In his recent book, *Heading Towards Omega: In Search of the Meaning of the Near-Death Experience*, Ring writes about persons who have had such experiences: "Once they have encountered the light, they yearn to remain with it forever."

"There are observable changes in personality following these experiences," he noted, adding that "these transformations may have profound evolutionary importance for the future of humanity. We are seeing people become more lov-

ing, more sensitive to life around them. Perhaps these experiences are a forerunner to higher consciousness, to a more highly evolved human being."

The author further notes:

"None of these persons bring scientific proof of life after death, of course. They bring something personally more important: subjective proof. They claim to know in a way and from a source that removes all doubt. Each of us must make of this collective testimony what we will."

10. COLLECT BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR MEMBERS.

Key questions facing churches and synagogues today are: How well are they listening to what is being said and felt by members, but also, are they making full use of modern and reliable methods to enhance the listening process—namely, quantitative and qualitative survey research.

Before a church or synagogue can plan for its future, and operate on the basis of facts, not assumptions, it should seek answers to certain basic questions:

1. What has been the pattern of faith development in peoples' lives?
2. Is faith development important to people?
3. How do people deal with spiritual "highs" and "lows?"
4. What are the current levels of religious beliefs, practice, knowledge, spiritual commitment, and stewardship among the people of the church or synagogue?
5. To what extent do people of the church or synagogue put their faith into action?
6. What are the spiritual and physical needs of the people the church or synagogue is supposed to serve?
7. What is bringing people to your church or synagogue—what is keeping them away?

Carefully-designed surveys can help answer these basic questions and aid religious institutions in their effort to maintain a healthy balance of membership nurture, social concern, and spiritual renewal.

While a church or synagogue should not be controlled by public opinion—the role of the clergy is certainly to *lead* not *follow* public opinion—answers to the preceding questions are vital if a church or synagogue is to be effective in its mission.

Much practical information on religious growth has been gathered by a number of denominations and religious organizations in recent years, with most of this information readily available. It would be wise for clergy to be privy to this information.

If you are interested in the possibilities of conducting a survey of your congregation and/or local community and would like expert help and advice, we suggest you contact Russell D. Bredholt, Continental Research Associates, P.O. Box 3700, Winter Springs, Florida, 32708. Telephone: (305) 365-4321. Continental Research Associates is affiliated with the Princeton Religion Research Center.

Continental Research Associates is prepared to help you with the *internal* use of surveys (ranging from pastor and staff assessment to determining the level of spiritual commitment of a congregation) and with *external* surveys (starting new churches, and for evangelism and outreach).

In the back of this report the reader will find the full set of questions asked in the survey on faith development, as well as a guide to focus research.

The Questionnaire

1. During the past two years, have you done any of the following? (READ)

Yes	No	
1 ☐	☐	Volunteered time to help poor or needy people.
2 ☐	☐	Regularly read a newspaper.
3 ☐	☐	Discussed political issues or social problems with friends.
4 ☐	☐	Participated in a class or study group, in a church or synagogue.
5 ☐	☐	Studied, either individually or with others, one or more major social problems, such as peace, racism, sexism, etc.
6 ☐	☐	Read a book dealing with finding more meaning in life.
7 ☐	☐	Attended religious services at least once a month.
8 ☐	☐	Served on a church or synagogue board or committee.
9 ☐	☐	Been involved in political or community social action projects.

2. I am going to read you two statements. Please tell me which one best describes your own opinion.

   1 ☐ A person's faith *should not* change throughout life, because it is the foundation for living.

   Or

   2 ☐ A person's faith *should* change throughout life just as one's body and mind change.

3. During your lifetime, have you ever:

   FOR EACH "YES" RESPONSE IN QUESTION 3, QUESTIONS 4 AND 5 WERE ASKED.

4. Please tell me whether the experience affected your thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life a great deal, some, or not at all. (IF RESPONDENT HAD EXPERIENCE MORE THAN ONCE, ASK ABOUT MOST MEMORABLE OR SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE).

5. How old were you when this happened? (BEST ESTIMATE ACCEPTABLE)

READ . . .	Q. 3 Yes	No	Q. 4 Great deal	Some	Not at all	Don't know/no answer	Q. 5 Age
a. Received a promotion or honor at work?	1		1	2	3	y	
b. Had a baby (as father *or* mother)?	2		1	2	3	y	
c. Had a divorce?	3		1	2	3	y	
d. Experienced the death of a loved one?	4		1	2	3	y	
e. Been lonely for a long period of time?	5		1	2	3	y	
f. Had a "born again" experience?	6		1	2	3	y	
g. Been seriously worried about your health?	7		1	2	3	y	
h. Been out of work for a long period of time?	8		1	2	3	y	
i. Considered an abortion for yourself or someone close to you?	9		1	2	3	y	
j. Made the conscious decision to leave a church or religious group?	0		1	2	3	y	
k. Received counseling for emotional difficulty?	x		1	2	3	y	

ASK EVERYONE:

6. When you are faced with a problem or crisis, like those in the previous question, to which of the following kinds of support would you likely turn for help?

Yes	No	
1	☐	Share it with family.
2	☐	Share it with close friends.
3	☐	Discuss it with a class or a group in your church or synagogue.
4	☐	Work it through on your own.
5	☐	Read the Bible or other inspirational literature.
6	☐	Seek help from a religious counselor.
7	☐	Seek other professional counseling.
8	☐	Seek help from a support group.
9	☐	Pray about it.

7. How much have you *thought* about each of the following during the past two years: a lot, a fair amount, only a little, or not at all?

	A lot	A fair amount	Only a little	Not at all	Don't know/ no answer
A. Your relation to God.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	y ☐
B. Living a worthwhile life.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	y ☐
C. Developing your faith.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	y ☐
D. The basic meaning and value of your life.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	y ☐

8a. Which *one* of the following four statements comes closest to your own view of "faith"? (ALL STATEMENTS WERE READ BEFORE RESPONSE WAS ACCEPTED.)

8a.		8b.
1 ☐	A set of beliefs	1 ☐
2 ☐	Membership in a church or synagogue	2 ☐
3 ☐	Finding meaning in life	3 ☐
4 ☐	A relationship with God	4 ☐
x ☐	The idea of faith is not meaningful to me (VOLUNTEERED)	

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE GET ONE ANSWER FOR THIS QUESTION. IF RESPONDENT INSISTS ON CHOOSING MORE THAN ONE ANSWER, ASK Q. 8b:

8b. You chose (READ ITEMS CHECKED IN Q. 8a). Which *one* of these comes closest to your own view? (RECORD UNDER 8b ABOVE)

9. Imagine a five-point scale, where "1" is a person you would describe as having little or no faith, and "5" is a person with a great deal of faith. Where would you place yourself on this scale? You may choose any number from 1 to 5.

Little Or No Faith 1 2 3 4 5 Great Deal Of Faith

10. Using the same five-point scale, where would you place yourself at about the age of 16?

Little Or No Faith 1 2 3 4 5 Great Deal Of Faith

11. How important is religion in your life—would you say: not important, fairly unimportant, fairly important, or very important?

1 Not important
2 Fairly unimportant
3 Fairly important or
4 Very important

12. How important to you is the belief that your life is meaningful or has a purpose?

1 Not important
2 Fairly unimportant
3 Fairly important or
4 Very important

13. Would you say your experience with religion during your lifetime has been

1 Very positive?
2 Somewhat positive?
3 Neither positive nor negative?
4 somewhat negative?
5 Very negative?

14. I am going to read you some statements. For each I would like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with the statement using a five-point scale. If "5" on the scale means you strongly agree and "1" means you strongly disagree where would you place yourself, remember you may use any number from 1 to 5.

		Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
a.	I feel close to God when I participate in a service of worship	1	2	3	4	5
b.	I sometimes wonder about the existence of God	1	2	3	4	5
c.	God punishes bad people.	1	2	3	4	5
d.	The human mind can never fully understand God	1	2	3	4	5
e.	God is the name we have given to the intelligence of the universe	1	2	3	4	5
f.	You have to go to church or practice religious *ritual* if you expect God to do anything for you	1	2	3	4	5
g.	People should just believe in God and not argue about religion	1	2	3	4	5
h.	God reveals himself through a variety of religious beliefs and traditions	1	2	3	4	5

15. Now, which of these two statements best describes your own opinion?

1 ☐ A person's faith is usually strengthened by questioning early beliefs.

Or

2 ☐ A person's faith is usually weakened by questioning early beliefs.

16. In terms of your own definition of "faith," would you say your faith changed significantly . . . (MULTIPLE ANSWERS ACCEPTED)

		Yes
a.	In the past 5 years?	1 ☐
b.	In the past 6–10 years?	2 ☐
c.	In the past 10–20 years?	3 ☐
e.	More than 20 years ago?	4 ☐
x.	Or Never? — GO TO Q21	x ☐

17. About how old were you when your faith changed significantly? (BEST ESTIMATE. IF MORE THAN ONE ANSWER ABOVE ACCEPT MULTIPLE ANSWERS HERE)

_____ _____ _____

18. Which of these words or phrases best describes your faith as a result of the change? IS IT . . . RECORD RESPONSE FOR EACH PAIR OF PHRASES

a.	1 ☐ Stronger?	Or	2 ☐ Weaker?
b.	1 ☐ Less Meaningful?	Or	2 ☐ More Meaningful?
c.	1 ☐ Totally Different?	Or	2 ☐ A Little Different?

19. Would you describe the change mostly as . . .

1 ☐ Coming about as a result of a lot of thought and discussion about faith?

Or

2 ☐ Coming about as a result of a strong emotional experience?

20. Would you say the change? (CHOOSE ONE)

1 ☐ Came at a time when your life was essentially "stable" or "normal"?

2 ☐ Or, came at a time when your life was "turbulent" or "chaotic"?

21. What is your religious preference?

1 ☐ Roman Catholic—GO TO Q. 23	5 ☐ Evangelical
2 ☐ Protestant	6 ☐ Humanist
3 ☐ Jewish	7 ☐ Mormon—GO TO Q. 23
4 ☐ Orthodox	8 ☐ Other (SPECIFY) _____
	9 ☐ None—GO TO Q. 25

22. Within your general religious preference, do you have a specific preference (denomination, etc)? If so, what is it?

_____

23. Are you a member of or actively related to a church, synagogue, or other organization of your religious preference?

1 ☐ Yes

2 ☐ No

24. Do you consider yourself more active or less active now than you were 10 years ago?

1 ☐ More
2 ☐ Less
3 ☐ No Change/neither (VOLUNTEERED)

25. What sort of things, if any, do you do to nourish or strengthen your faith or sense of meaning in life?

Yes	No	
1 ☐	1 ☐	Pray or meditate alone
2 ☐	2 ☐	Attend religious services
3 ☐	3 ☐	Study the Bible or religious topics in a church class or study group
4 ☐	4 ☐	Discuss personal problems with a pastor or other religious counselor
5 ☐	5 ☐	Watch religious TV
6 ☐	6 ☐	Read the Bible or other religious books
7 ☐	7 ☐	Participate in a prayer group
8 ☐	8 ☐	Deal with personal problems on your own

Focus Group Research

Focus group research may be conducted either in conjunction with or independently of a survey project. Unlike quantitative surveys, focus group research depends little on structure. As such, it is qualitative rather than quantitative. When used in conjunction with a survey project, focus groups can provide important information to insure that all appropriate issues are addressed in a questionnaire.

Typically, a focus group consists of eight to ten participants and a moderator. The selection of a qualified moderator is the key to a successful focus group session. The moderator must be perceived as neutral toward the subject under discussion. His or her goal is to lead the group through a pre-defined agenda without biasing the discussion and to obtain the personal views of the participants rather than merely socially-desirable responses. The moderator should direct the group without interjecting his or her own opinions and move the discussion through an agenda without offending the members of the group.

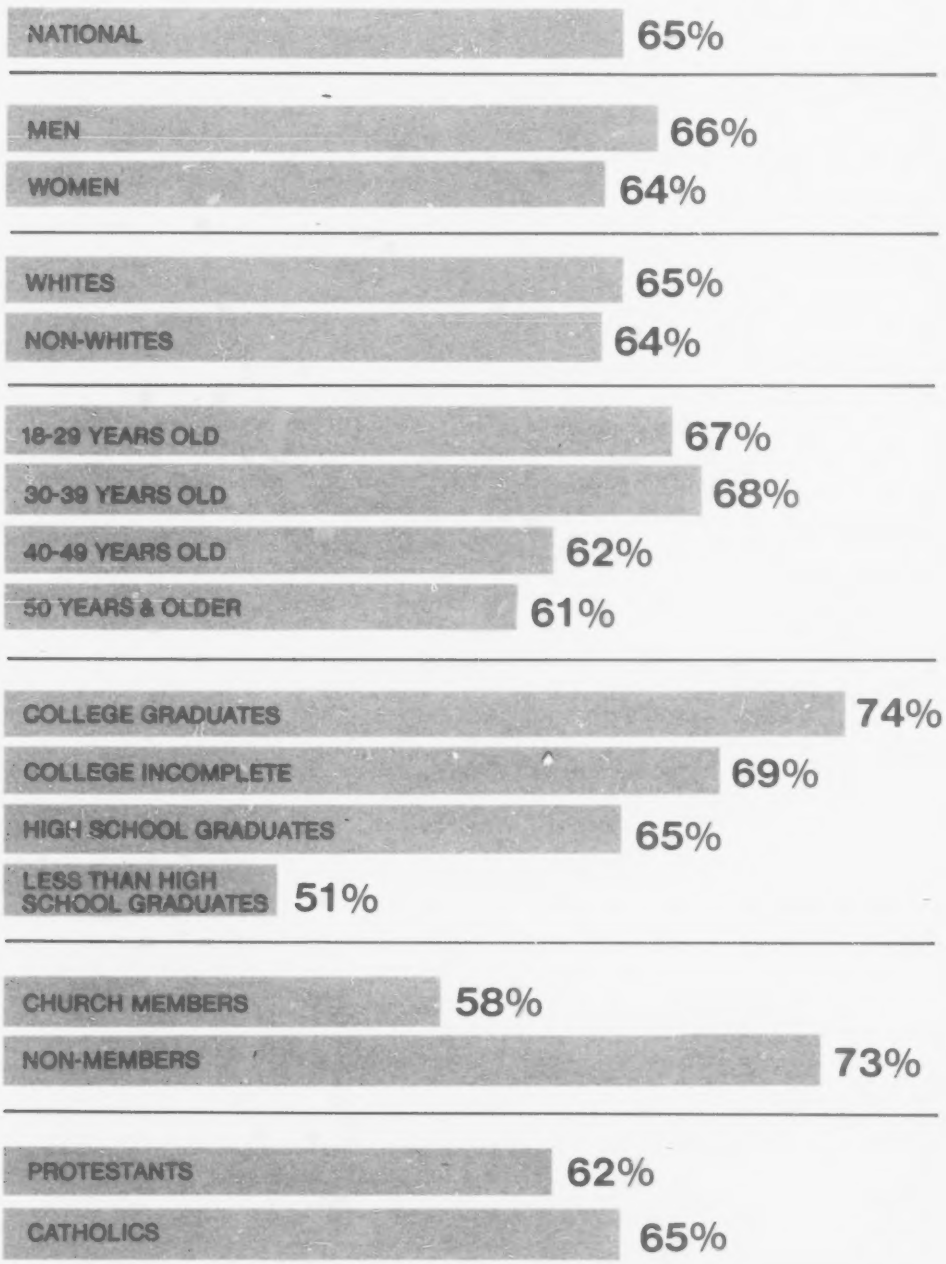
When choosing the members of a focus group, have a set of selection criteria in mind. Choose as participants people you feel will be comfortable with each other. Leave out those with abrasive personalities or those whom you think might attempt to dominate the session. In addition, allow for variation in demographic and other characteristics so that more than one point of view is represented. You might, for example, divide the group equally on the basis of sex and socioeconomic status.

Focus group sessions should last about an hour and ideally should be held during an evening or on a weekend, when working people are most likely to be available and when spouses can care for young children. It is also recommended that each participant be paid a small amount—perhaps $20—to act as an incentive and to help defray costs such as car fare, baby sitter fees, etc., associated with participation.

Focus group sessions should be tape recorded and the tape(s) transcribed. Research has shown that, although people are somewhat self-conscious about being taped during the first few minutes of a session, in most cases the tape-recording machinery soon blends into the background and does not inhibit discussion.

PERCEPTION OF WHETHER FAITH SHOULD CHANGE

(Percent saying "should change")



Technical Appendix

Composition of the Sample

	National Weighted %	No. of Interviews
Sex		
Men	48.0	514
Women	52.0	528
	100.0	1,042
Race		
Whites	86.6	867
Non-whites	13.4	161
	100.0	1,028
Age of respondent		
Under 30 years	27.3	305
30 to 39 years	22.6	272
40 to 49 years	13.4	243
50 & older	36.1	314
Undesignated	0.6	8
	100.0	1,042
Education of respondent		
College graduates	21.7	295
College incomplete	19.2	217
High school graduates	40.1	397
Less than high school graduates	18.7	128
Undesignated	0.3	5
	100.0	1,042

Annual household income		
$40,000 and over	16.0	192
$30,000 to $39,999	13.0	150
$20,000 to $29,999	18.0	198
$10,000 to $19,999	23.4	234
Under $10,000	14.9	128
Undesignated	14.7	140
	100.0	1,042
City size		
Central city	28.8	316
Urban	25.1	280
Rural	46.1	446
	100.0	1,042
Region		
East	25.7	284
Midwest	25.6	293
South	29.5	283
West	19.2	182
	100.0	1,042
Religious preference		
Protestant	55.8	561
Catholic	25.3	273
Jewish	2.7	31
Other	7.5	96
None/no answer	8.7	81
	100.0	1,042

Telephone Sample Design

The Gallup Organization's national telephone samples are derived from the national probability sample of locations drawn for its personal interview surveys.

Briefly, the population is arrayed by city size, and by states and regions. From this ordering a sample of locations is drawn, with the probability of selection proportional to the population size of the locations. For personal interview surveys the procedure first selects a civil division such as a city, town or township, then selects a small part of that division, such as a block, a block cluster, or a small areal segment. In the course of regular personal interview surveys within these small areas telephone numbers are obtained from each household in which an interview takes place and which has a telephone.

The telephone numbers so obtained form the basis for generation of samples of telephone numbers. In effect, each such telephone number selects an exchange and a bank of 100 numbers. This procedure provides a national sample of telephone exchanges, with representation proportional to the incidence of residential listings by exchanges. The sample of exchanges is up-to-date in terms of working banks of numbers, both listed and unlisted. Since the exchanges are selected from locations stratified by region, city size, and urbanization, the net effect is similar stratification of telephone exchanges.

Numbers for the telephone samples are generated in the following manner from each exchange and bank of numbers selected:

1. Assume that one of the telephone numbers obtained during a personal interview survey has a suffix 4731. This number defines a bank of 100 numbers from 4700 to 4799.
2. For a typical telephone survey four consecutive numbers, say 4732, 4733, 4734 and 4735, are treated as a block and assigned to an interviewer. (These generated numbers may include unlisted numbers, not found in telephone directories).
3. Starting with the first number (4732), the interviewer works through the four numbers, attempting to complete an interview. If an interview cannot be obtained from this block, an additional block is assigned.
4. The phone numbers obtained in personal interview surveys are augmented, when necessary, by numbers drawn from telephone directories. When such augmentation is required, numbers are drawn randomly, subject to the requirement that they be operative in the same locality as the personal interview survey.

Within each household contacted by telephone an interview is sought with the youngest man 18 years or older who is at home. If no man is at home, an interview is sought with the oldest woman at home. In addition, a sex quota is assigned for subareas. This method of respondent selection within households produces an age distribution by men and women that closely approximates the age distribution of the total population.

As many as three attempts, if necessary, are made to reach respondents at each telephone number falling into the sample. These calls are made at different times of day and on different days of the week to maximize the chances of reaching households in the sample.

Interviewing is conducted on weekends or weekday evenings, times when adults are most likely to be at home.

The pre-stratification is routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the latest Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of telephone households. Minor adjustments are also made by weighting for educational attainment and age using Census estimates.

The Design of the Sample*

The Gallup Organization, Inc., maintains a national probability sample of interviewing areas which was drawn in the following manner:

1. The United States was divided into seven size-of-community strata: Central cities of population 1,000,000 and over; 250,000 to 999,999; and 50,000 to 249,999; the urbanized areas of all these central cities as a single stratum; cities of 2,500 to 49,999; rural villages; and rural open country areas.

2. Within each of these strata, the population was further stratified by seven regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, East Central, West Central, South, Mountain and Pacific Coast.

3. Within each size of community-regional stratum, the population was arrayed in geographic order and zoned into equal groups of sampling units.

4. From this array of data, in each zone pairs of localities were selected with probability of selection proportional to size of the population producing two replicated samples of localities. Selecting localities with probability proportional to size, a method repeated

*This is the sample design for Trends, the personal interview omnibus survey of The Gallup Organization, Inc. For independent custom surveys either this sample or a multi-call probability sample can be provided.

at subsequent stages, among other things contributes much of the advantage of stratification by population size of the area sampling units and the gain in sampling efficiency of a variable sampling ratio by size of unit.

5. Within cities so selected for which population data are reported by subdivisions such as Census Tracts, such subdivisions are drawn with probability of selection proportional to size of population.

6. For cities, minor civil divisions and rural areas selected for which population data are not reported by Census Tracts, other small, definable geographic areas are drawn, with probability of selection proportional to size where available data permit; otherwise with equal probability.

7. Within each subdivision for which block statistics are available, a block is drawn with probability of selection proportional to number of dwelling units. Blocks with too few dwelling units, including blocks with no dwelling units, are combined with adjacent blocks in the Census listing until the minimum number of dwelling units required is included.

8. In subdivisions, such as Census enumeration districts, in cities and towns for which block statistics are not available, blocks are drawn at random, that is, with equal probability.

9. In subdivisions with minor civil divisions which are rural or open in character, segments approximately equal in size of population are delineated and drawn with equal probability.

10. In each cluster of blocks and each segment so selected, a randomly selected starting point is designated on the interviewer's map of the area. Starting at this point, interviewers are required to follow a given direction in the selection of households, taking households in sequence, until their assigned number of interviews has been completed.

11. Within each occupied dwelling unit or household reached the interviewer asks to speak to the youngest man 18 or older at home, or if no man is home, the oldest woman 18 or older. This method for selection within the household has been developed empirically to produce an age distribution of the population. It increases the probability of selecting younger men, who are at home who tend to be under-represented if given an equal chance of being drawn from among those at home. The method of selection among those at home within the household is not strictly at random, but it is systematic and objective.

12. Interviewing is conducted at times when adults, in general, are most likely to be at home, which means on weekends or if on weekdays, after 4:00 P.M. for women and after 6:00 P.M. for men.

13. Allowance for persons not at home is made by a "times-at-home" weighting procedure* rather than by "call-backs." This procedure is one standard method for reducing the sample bias that would otherwise result from under-representation in the sample of persons who are difficult to find at home.

14. The pre-stratification by regions is routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the latest available Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of the population. Also minor adjustments of the sample are made by educational attainment (by men and women separately), based on the annual estimates of the Census Bureau derived from their Current Population Survey.

*Politz, A. and Simmons, W., "An attempt to Get the 'Not at Homes' into the Sample without Callbacks," Journal of the American Statistical Association, Vol. 44 (March, 1949), 9–51.

15. The sampling procedure described is designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population, eighteen years and older, living in the United States, except for those persons in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.

Sampling Tolerances

The following tables may be used in estimating the sampling error of any percentage in this report. The computed allowances have taken into account the effect of the sample design upon sampling error. They may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) within which the results of repeated samplings in the same time period could be expected to vary, 95% of the time, assuming the same sampling procedure, the same interviewers, and the same questionnaire.

The first table shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error of a percentage.

Recommended Allowance For Sampling Error of a Percentage

In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)*

	Sample Size				
	1000	600	400	200	100
Percentages near 10	2	3	4	5	-
Percentages near 20	3	4	5	-	9
Percentages near 30	4	4	6	8	10
Percentages near 40	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 50	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 60	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 70	4	4	6	8	10
Percentages near 80	3	4	5	-	9
Percentages near 90	2	3	4	5	-

*The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

The table would be used in the following manner: Let us say a reported percentage is 33 for a group which includes 400 respondents. Then we go to row "percentages near 30" in the table and go to the column headed "400." The number at this point is 6, which means that the 33% obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 6 points. Another way of saying it is that very probably (95 chances out of 100) the average of repeated samplings would be somewhere between 27 and 39, with the most likely figure the 33 obtained.

In comparing survey results in two samples, such as, for example, men and women, the question arises as to how large must a *difference* between them be before one can be reasonably sure that it reflects a real difference. In the table below, the number of points which must be allowed for in such comparisons is indicated.

Two tables are provided. One is for percentages near 20 or 80; the other for percentages near 50. For percentages in between, the error to be allowed for is between those shown in the two tables:

Recommended Allowance For Sampling Error of the Difference

In Percentage Points
(at 95 in 100 confidence level)*

TABLE A	Percentages near 20 or percentages near 80			
Size of Sample	600	400	200	100
600	6	–		
400	–	8		
200	8	9	10	
100	10	11	12	14

TABLE B	Percentages near 50			
Size of Sample	600	400	200	100
600	8	9		
400	8	10		
200	11	11	13	
100	13	14	16	18

Here is an example of how the tables would be used. Let us say that 60% of men respond a certain way and 40% of women respond that way also, for a difference of 20% points between them. Can we say with any assurance that the 20-point difference reflects a real difference between men and women on the question? The sample contains 449 men and 556 women.

Since the percentages are near 50, we consult Table B and since the two samples are about 400 persons each, we look for the number in the column headed "400" which is also in the row designated "400." We find the number 10 here. This means that the allowance for error should be 10 points, and that in concluding that the percentage among men is somewhere between 10 and 50 points higher than the percentage among women we should be wrong only about 5% of the time. In other words, we can conclude with considerable confidence that a difference exists in the direction observed and that it amounts to at least 10 percentage points.

If, in another case, men's responses amount to 22%, say, and women's 24%, we consult Table A because these percentages are near 20. We look in the column headed "400" and see that the number is 8. Obviously, then, the 2 point difference is inconclusive.

*The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

Notes

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